THE MAKROPOULOS SECRET

KAREL CAPEK

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THE MAKROPOULOS SECRET

By KAREL ČAPEK
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Adapted by Randal C. Burrell
Introduction by H. T. Parker

BOSTON
JOHN W. LUCE & COMPANY

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INTRODUCTION

The Makropoulos Secret was first played in the National Theater of Prague in November of 1922, and it was then that Karel Capek wrote to his audience:

" The idea of this new comedy first occurred to me about three or four years ago, before writing ' R. U. R.' It seemed then to be an ideal subject for a novel, but that is a form of writing I do not care for. The idea itself came from the theory of Professor Mecnik, that age is caused by an auto-intoxicating organism.

" I make these statements because Bernard Shaw's new play, ' Back to Methuselah,' which I have seen in synopsis only, appeared this winter. In actual measure, it is very impressive. It, too, has the motif of longevity. This likeness in theme is entirely accidental, and, it seems to me from the synopsis, that while Bernard Shaw comes to the same conclusion as I do, it is in quite the opposite manner. Mr. Shaw believes that it is possible for an ideal community of people to live several hundred years in a sort of paradise. As the play-goer perceives, long life in my play is treated quite differently; I think that such a condition is neither ideal nor desirable. Both ideas are

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purely hypothetical since neither has the proof of experience. Yet perhaps I may say this much: Mr. Shaw's play is a classic example of optimism, and my own — a hopeless instance of pessimism.

" Whether I am called an optimist or a pessimist, will make me neither happier nor sadder; yet, ' to be a pessimist ' implies, it would seem, a silent rebuke from the world for bad behavior. In this comedy I have striven to present something delightful and optimistic. Does the optimist believe that it is bad to live sixty years but good to live three hundred? I merely think that when I proclaim a life of the ordinary span of sixty years as good enough in this world, I am not guilty of criminal pessimism. If we say that, at some future time, there will be no disease, misery, or poverty — that certainly is optimism. If we say that this daily life of ours, full of deprivation and sorrow, is not really so irreconcilable, but has in it something of immense value — is that pessimism? I think not. One turns from bad to higher things: the other searches for something better and higher in ordinary existence. The one looks for paradise — there is not a loftier vision for the human soul — the other strives for recompense in life itself. Is this pessimism?"

In that Europe which is old and wise and patient and exacting, a man does not set to

a task in the arts until he has learned how to use his medium and his tools. Therefore is Karel Capek expert craftsman of the theater. Two years and a half ago, Americans were discovering him in "R. U. R." as produced in New York by the Theater Guild, and great was their joy of him. Soon they knew him and his brother both in "The Insect Comedy," and substantial and stimulating were the satisfactions. By that time "The Makropoulos Secret" had been acted in Budapest, and producing managers in America were making speed to scan a rough draft of the play. Perhaps the managers failed to visualize it in actual representation — an outlook sometimes denied them. Possibly, like good Americans, they believed that all things go in spasms and that "the Capek boom" in our theater was nearly past. More singularly, none of our leading actresses seems to have known or sought the piece. Yet for them it contains the high-pitched, the all-pervading, the virtuosa part of a generation.

The technician and the layman sit alike in admiration before a playwright who can arrest attention and kindle interest in the very first speeches of his play; who can coördinate the introduction of the personages into the progress

of the narrative; who from the interaction of both can quicken premises into curiosity aroused and suspense set a-vibrating. Of such a Capek is the first act of "The Makropoulos Secret." Before it is done we are engrossed in the suit of Gregor against Prus — a hundred years old; in Emilia Marty, singing-woman, mysterious intervener and informer; in the spell she lays with nearly every contact; in the fulfilment forthwith of her sayings. Prus, Gregor, Vitek, Kolonaty have all come, as well, into individual human and theatric being.

A second act that apparently begins in decoration, only deepens the mystery and intensifies the fascination hanging about Elina-Emilia. Incidents that pass as the embroidery, almost the digression of the moment — say the interchanges between the young lovers — speedily contribute to the main course of the dramatic narrative, the rising current of dramatic suspense. For the while, Capek seems to be taking the permissible privilege of the playwright to amusing conversation — and lo! almost every sentence is contributing to the riddle of Emilia. Quick, hard, terse and tense come the two strokes at the end. At the blow and aim unmissed, the playwright hammers home.

"The toils are laid, the stakes are set." A third act ensues — of the steeled Emilia caught in a press that may crush even steel; of Emilia spent, desperate, menaced, disclosing at last the mystery that has haunted the play. Again there are interludes — Prus's discovery of the suicide of his son because the father had won the woman that the youth also craved; the foolish interventions of old Hauk-Sendorf. Yet the one is as the red bolt to pierce these darkening clouds; the other as the irony attending nearly every human crisis. "The melodrama, the staginess, the superfluity of the mock mediæval inquisition!" the reader is quick to say, as he cons the manuscript. Capek, however, writes for the stage, not for the easy-chair. In the theater these trappings retort with spell against spell upon the wavering Emilia. Nay, with them as well as with his hands, the justiciar clutches her by the throat and bids her exude the secret.

The woman reveals it and the suspense of the play seems ended — only to renew itself. For what shall be done with life everlasting? And in the next room Elena-Emilia waits. There is debate, in which the debaters speak also in character and with emotion. There is human

decision. For Elena-Emilia there is also human release. So does the masterful Capek, abounding round a play that emotionally and suspensively seemed already full-circled.

Such work of the theater stirs the pride, quickens the zest of those who still love it, unashamed and unflagging, as seat — from time to time — of the arts. Yet Capek and "The Makropoulos Secret" would not so prevail unless they carried freight of matter to engage the mind, quicken the imagination, stir the spirit — matter, moreover, intrinsically human in content and implication, by the playwright and the stage vitalized. "The Makropoulos Secret" is the secret of life unending. The mystery of Emilia Marty, born Elena Makropoulos, is the mystery of endless existence dovetailing into the daily lives of men and women that are mortal. Her spell is the spell of a woman persisting and all-knowing, case-hardened in the virtue and vice, the experience and the sensation, of a life that has ceased to begin and wax, to waver and decline—a life that is perpetual. The secret once disclosed, the mystery once dispelled, it is as though a flood of light were bathing every facet of Elena-Emilia, pouring into every devious nook and dark corner of her

courses before and within the play; beating upon every reaction in those about her.

Matter of fantasy, it is true, but matter that weaves these imaginings into the actualities of human experience. Matter of the theater, it is also true, but matter impregnated with human content and choice, speculation and even philosophy. Matter indeed of substance and vitality for the mind, the imagination and the spirit. And it is these things that Capek sums in the epilogue of debate and decision. For the while Emilia has quit the scene. The lawyer, the clerk, the nobleman, the suitor, youth in the girl, Kristina, senility in doddering Sendorf, hold in their hands the formula of everlasting life. With it they might lengthen, ripen and fill to brimming human days; breed an aristocracy of supermen; alter the whole course and custom of terrestrial existence. Emilia, who was Elena, slips through the door. From mind and heart upon her lips is the tale, the burden, the penalty of this life everlasting, wherein all sensations, emotions, impulses, experiences, numb into an eternal monotony of repetition. She is as mirror to the woman unperturbed by the suicide of the boy, undismayed when the trap closes upon her.

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Bearing testimony, Elena-Emilia gives also verdict. Youth in Kristina; age in Sendorf; perception, understanding, sympathy and release in the others—affirm it. In the candle, the formula burns to ashes. From the window those ashes are scattered to the winds. Humanity as well as Elena Makropoulos is released from the eternities, rebound in the mortalities. It has its will; it is content, though the ironies try to laugh upon the woman's lips. "And what deterred you," the others have asked her, " from finding your own means of escape?" She answers: " I was afraid of death." In Sæcula Sæculorum.

H. T. Parker.

May 7, 1924

CAST OF CHARACTERS

EMILIA MARTY
JAROSLAV PRUS
ALBERT GREGOR
JANEK PRUS
KRISTINA
DR. KOLONATY
HAUK-SENDORF
VITEK
MECHANIC
SCRUBWOMAN
EMILIA'S MAID
PHYSICIAN

Act I Dr. Kolonaty's law office.
Act II The stage of a theater.
Act III Emilia Marty's boudoir at an hotel.

THE MAKROPOULOS SECRET

ACT I

[*The outer office of Dr. Kolonaty, Attorney at Law in a provincial city of the old Austro-Hungarian empire.*

The musty furniture, the accumulation of books and papers and, in particular, the tall document file at the back of the room, whose many pigeonholes are stuffed with the briefs of long-forgotten cases, plainly show that Dr. Kolonaty's is a comfortably established practice which has passed through several generations of the same family. In the rear is a door opening from the outer hallway and, on the left, is another door leading presumably to the inner offices. The clerk, Vitek, whom Dr. Kolonaty inherited along with the furniture and the clientele, has a small, flat-topped desk at the left. On it is a confused mass of maps, proclamations, law briefs; and a telephone. In the center of the room is a double desk and, on the right are several chairs.

At the rise of the curtain Vitek is seated on the top of a step-ladder, beside the file. His hands

are full of these ancient papers which he is busily rearranging. At last they are all put away except one large group, tied together. He pauses in his work and turns round.]

VITEK

Gregor vs. Prus.— The case of Gregor vs. Prus — you're finished. [*He sighs*] Ah, well. [*Thumbing the briefs*] Eighteen twenty-seven — eighteen thirty-two — thirty-two — eighteen forty — forty — forty — forty-seven — and so on. Why, in three years we could have had a centennial jubilee! Finished. Such a good case, too! [*He pushes them into one of the pigeonholes*] Here lies Gregor vs. Prus. Oh, nothing lives forever — *vanitas*. Dust and ashes! Baron Prus — the old nobility! The old scoundrel! [*He rises, inflamed by his thoughts, and orates in his best revolutionary manner*] Citoyen — citizens. Will you tolerate forever these privileged ones, this old nobility protected by the kings of France? This class whose rights spring from neither nature nor reason but from tyranny — this class of courtiers — these usurpers of free lands by might, not right ——. Oh ——.

[*A well dressed man of about thirty appears in the doorway and, unseen by Vitek, watches him a moment*]

GREGOR

Good day, Citizen Marat.

VITEK

[*Still in the full heat of his oratory*]

No, no. That's not Marat; that's Danton: the oration of the twenty-third of October, seventeen ninety-two. [*Suddenly realizing who is present, he again becomes Vitek, the clerk*] I beg a thousand pardons, Sir.

GREGOR

Isn't the Doctor here?

VITEK

[*Hastily climbing down the ladder*]

No, Sir, he hasn't come back yet, Sir.

GREGOR

And the verdict?

VITEK

I don't know, Sir. It's a shame — such a good case, Sir.

GREGOR

Is it lost?

VITEK

That I don't know; the Doctor has been in court all morning, but — I — should ——

GREGOR

[*Throwing himself into the armchair*]

Telephone the court! Ask for Dr. Kolonaty. Hurry!

VITEK

[*Running to the telephone*]

Yes, Sir. Right away, Sir. Hello ——? I shouldn't have carried it to the Supreme Court, Sir.

GREGOR

Why?

VITEK

Because — Hello —— ? Two-two-three-five — yes — three-five — yes. [*He turns round*] Because it means the end, Sir!

GREGOR

The end?

VITEK

[*Forgetting the telephone*]

The end of the case of Gregor vs. Prus. Why, Sir, it wasn't any longer just a case. It had become an historical monument —— Just think, it has lasted for over ninety —— [*Into the telephone*] Hello. Yes, Miss. This is Dr. Kolonaty's office. I'd like to speak with the Doctor. Yes, this is his office. [*He turns round*] Gregor vs. Prus. Yes indeed — that's a piece of history. Almost one hundred years — [*Into the telephone*] Hello ——? Has he gone? Oh, thank you. [*He hangs up the receiver*] He's already left. He's probably on his way over here.

GREGOR

And the verdict ——?

VITEK

I wish I could tell you, Sir, but I don't know. I wish there weren't going to be one! I can't help it, Mr. Gregor. But when I think that this is the last day of the case of Gregor vs. Prus — Why, I've been writing on it for thirty-four years, that was when your deceased father — God rest his soul — used to come here. Ah, he and the deceased Dr. Kolonaty, this one's father — that was a great generation, Sir.
[*The old clerk sighs as he recalls past glories*]

GREGOR

Indeed.

VITEK

Great lawyers, Sir — Why, for thirty years they kept up this case, Sir — appeals and such clever tricks. But you — boom — straight to the highest court — and that ends it! It's too bad. Such a beautiful case. And to kill a hundred-year case — like *that.*

GREGOR

Don't, Vitek. I want to win it.

VITEK

Or lose it, Sir?

GREGOR

I'd rather lose it than — be this way ——. Listen, Vitek. It's maddening! To have a hun-

dred and fifty million under your nose all the time, almost to have your hands on it. To hear of nothing else all your life. [*He stands up*] Do you think I shall lose?

VITEK

I don't know, Mr. Gregor. Very doubtful case, Sir.

GREGOR

Very well. If I lose, then ——

VITEK

You will shoot yourself, Sir? Your deceased father used to talk just the same way.

GREGOR

And he shot himself.

VITEK

But not because of the case — his debts. When one lives that way — on his prospects —

GREGOR

[*Dropping back into the chair*]
Oh, be quiet, I beg of you.

VITEK

Oh, you haven't nerve enough for a big case. And such beautiful material, too. [*He climbs up the ladder and takes out the Gregor papers*] Just look at these briefs, Mr. Gregor. Eighteen twenty-seven, the oldest number in our office. Unique, Sir. It ought to be in a museum. And look at the beautiful handwriting of eighteen

forty. Lord, that man had a hand! Why, Sir, I tell you it's a pleasure to look at it.

GREGOR

Oh, you are a fool — let me alone.

VITEK

[*Putting back the papers piously*]

Well, well. Perhaps the Supreme Court will still put it off.

[*A demure young girl, who at eighteen still wears her hair down, quietly opens the door*]

KRISTINA

Papa, aren't you coming home?

VITEK

[*Climbing down the ladder*]

Right away. Right away. As soon as the Doctor gets back.

GREGOR

[*Standing up*]

Your daughter?

VITEK

Oh, yes. Stay outside, Kristina. Wait for me in the corridor.

GREGOR

Oh, please don't, that is, not on my account. [*To Kristina.*] Are you coming from school?

KRISTINA

No, from a rehearsal.

VITEK

My daughter sings in the theater. Now run along, Kristina. There's nothing you can do here.

KRISTINA

Papa, she is mar-vel-ous!

GREGOR

Who?

KRISTINA

Why, Mademoiselle Marty, of course. Emilia Marty.

GREGOR

Emilia Marty?

KRISTINA

She is the greatest singer in the world. You know she's singing tonight, and this morning she rehearsed with us. [*A thought comes to her and she runs over to Vitek*] Oh, Papa!

VITEK

Yes?

KRISTINA

Papa, I — I —'m going to leave the theater. I don't want to keep on — not for anything. Not for anything.
[*She sobs and turns her back*]

VITEK

Why, Kristina, what have they done to you?

KRISTINA

Oh, it isn't that, it's because — I know so

little. Oh, Papa, Mademoiselle Marty — I — if you could hear her, you'd understand. I don't ever want to sing again.

VITEK

Will you listen to that! And she has a lovely voice, too. Silly girl! There, there!

GREGOR

Who knows, perhaps the famous Marty would envy you.

KRISTINA

Envy me. What for?

GREGOR

Your youth.

VITEK

Of course. Of course, so you see, Krista — this is Mr. Gregor, you know — wait till you're as old as she. How old is this Marty?

KRISTINA

I don't know. It's hard to tell. About thirty.

VITEK

You see, thirty. She's old.

KRISTINA

But she's beautiful. You can't imagine how beautiful she is!

VITEK

Well, thirty years! Just wait. When you're—

GREGOR

This evening I shall go to the theater, but not to see Marty — I shall go to see you.

KRISTINA

You'll be foolish not to look at Marty all the time — and blind, too. [*Realizing her audacity she stops. Then, to cover her confusion, she curtseys*] But I thank you, just the same.

VITEK

That's enough. [*To Gregor*] Oh, she's such a silly little goose.

KRISTINA

Well, he ought not to talk about Marty if he hasn't seen her. Everyone's crazy about her. Everyone!

KOLONATY

[*Entering briskly*]

Why, here's Kristina. How do you do, Kristina. Ah, and my client. How are you?

GREGOR

How did we come out?

KOLONATY

[*Handing his hat and coat to Vitek*]

We didn't. The Supreme Court adjourned.

GREGOR

For another conference?

KOLONATY

No, for dinner.

GREGOR

And the verdict?

KOLONATY

Not till this afternoon. My dear Sir, you must have patience. Have you had your dinner?

VITEK

Oh, Lord, Lord!

KOLONATY

What is it?

VITEK

Too bad! Such a beautiful case!

GREGOR

[*Sitting down*]
To wait again. Oh!

KRISTINA

Come on, Papa.

KOLONATY

Well, Kristina, and how are you getting along? It's nice to see you again.

GREGOR

Tell me frankly, what are our chances?

KOLONATY

La, la.

GREGOR

But?

KOLONATY

Listen, my friend. Did I ever give you any hopes?

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GREGOR

Then why are you ——?

KOLONATY

Why am I carrying on this case for you? Why? Because I inherited you, my friend. You, Vitek, and that desk over there. What do you expect? Gregor vs. Prus is a family inheritance — like a disease. And it doesn't cost you a cent.

GREGOR

You'll get paid after I win the case.

KOLONATY

Oh, yes, how nice that will be.

GREGOR

You think, then, we will lose?

KOLONATY

Of course.

GREGOR

[*Crushed for the moment*]
All right.

KOLONATY

Well, you don't have to shoot yourself yet.

KRISTINA

Papa!

GREGOR

[*Mastering himself*]
Oh, no. Tonight I am going to the theater to see you, Miss Kristina.

KRISTINA

Not me.

[*The bell rings*]

VITEK

What, someone else? I'll say you're not here.

[*He goes out*]

KOLONATY

My, my, Kristina, how you have grown! In a very short time, you will be a great lady.

KRISTINA

[*Who has been watching Gregor all the time*]

Look!

KOLONATY

What?

KRISTINA

Mr. Gregor. How pale he looks.

GREGOR

I beg your pardon. I'm not feeling well.

VITEK

[*Behind the door*]

In here, Madam. Yes, please. Enter, please. This way ——

[*Emilia Marty sweeps grandly into the office — a tall, strangely beautiful woman. What so many lesser actresses try to be, she is: cold but dazzling, unique, impelling, mysterious, and always at ease*]

KRISTINA

It's Marty!

EMILIA

[*Standing in the doorway*]
Dr. Kolonaty?

KOLONATY

Yes. What can I do for you?

EMILIA

I am Emilia Marty. I came to see you about ——

KOLONATY

[*With a deep bow he shows her a seat*]
Won't you, please?

EMILIA

Thank you. [*She advances into the room*] I came to see you about — the Gregor case.

GREGOR

What's that, Madam Marty?

EMILIA

I am not married.

KOLONATY

Mademoiselle Marty, this is Mr. Gregor, my client.

EMILIA

This one? [*She looks intently at him*] Very well. He can stay if he wants to.
[*She sits down*]

VITEK

[*Pushing Kristina out through the doorway*]
Now, come along, Kristina.
[*He leaves on tip-toe, bowing*]

EMILIA

I've seen that girl somewhere.

KOLONATY

[*Closing the door*]

Mademoiselle Marty, this is a great honor.

EMILIA

Not at all. So you are the lawyer?

KOLONATY

At your service.

EMILIA

And you represent this Mr. Gregor?

GREGOR

Why, of course.

EMILIA

In the case concerning the inheritance of Pepi Prus.

KOLONATY

That is, of Baron Joseph Ferdinand Prus, deceased eighteen hundred and twenty-seven.

EMILIA

What! Is he dead?

KOLONATY

I'm sorry to say, almost a hundred years ago.

EMILIA

Oh, the poor thing. I didn't know that.

KOLONATY

Oh, is that so? [*Sharply*] And is there anything else I can do for you?

EMILIA

[*She rises to leave*]

I don't want to take up your time.

KOLONATY

[*Also rising*]

I beg your pardon. I hardly think you'd come here without some reason.

EMILIA

No. [*She sits down again*] There is something I wanted to tell you.

KOLONATY

[*Sitting down*]

Concerning the Gregor case?

EMILIA

Yes.

KOLONATY

But aren't you a stranger?

EMILIA

Yes, of course. I only learned this morning about your — about this gentleman's case. Purely by chance.

KOLONATY

Really!

EMILIA

Only from the newspapers. I was reading

what they had written about me and all at once I saw: "The last day of the case: Gregor vs. Prus." Coincidence, wasn't it?

KOLONATY

Well, it was in all the newspapers.

EMILIA

And because — by accident — I remembered something — but first, won't you tell me some of the particulars of the case?

KOLONATY

Certainly. Ask me any questions you like.

EMILIA

I don't know anything about it.

KOLONATY

Nothing at all? Not a word?

EMILIA

It's the first time I have heard of it — really.

KOLONATY

But then — pardon me — I don't understand — why you are interested.

GREGOR

Tell her the story, Doctor.

KOLONATY

Well, it's a very old case.

EMILIA

Gregor's in the right, isn't he?

KOLONATY

Probably, but even so, that won't help him.

GREGOR

Tell her about it.

EMILIA

Please do.

KOLONATY

Well, if it interests you. [*He leans back in his armchair and talks rapidly*] Now, from eighteen hundred and twenty on, in the baronial estate of Prus; that is, in the estates of Semonix, Loukov, Nova, Ves, Konigsdord and so on, a feeble-minded baron, Joseph Ferdinand Prus —

EMILIA

Pepi — feeble-minded? No, no!

KOLONATY

Well, then, let us say eccentric.

EMILIA

[*Strangely insistent*]

No —— Say unfortunate.

KOLONATY

Pardon me. You can't be certain.

EMILIA

You, even less.

KOLONATY

Well, anyway — Joseph Ferdinand Prus died childless and without a will, in the year eighteen hundred and twenty-seven.

EMILIA

What did he die of?

KOLONATY

Inflammation of the brain, or something like that. His cousin, the Polish Baron Emmerich Prus, came into the inheritance. And a certain Ferdinand Karel Gregor, otherwise great-grandfather of my client, entered a claim on the property of Loukov.

EMILIA

When?

KOLONATY

Just after his death in eighteen twenty-seven.

EMILIA

But at that time Ferdinand must still have been a little boy.

KOLONATY

Quite right. At that time he was a pupil in the Teresan Academy. He was represented by a Viennese lawyer. His claim on the property of Loukov was based on these facts: That the deceased, one year before his death, came to the director of the Teresan Academy and declared that he was giving to Ferdinand Karel Gregor the aforesaid estate, along with the castle, farms, dairies and inventory. The income from the aforesaid property to be used for the education of the aforesaid minor, Gregor, which aforesaid must, as soon as he becomes of

age, take over the full ownership of the aforesaid property, item of fact *pro secundo.* The aforesaid minor received from the owner during the lifetime of the deceased the income and reports from the aforesaid property with the title of owner and possessor of the property of Loukov. Of which proof is given by possession. [*He pauses for effect and also to catch his breath*]

EMILIA

Well, that seems to order, doesn't it?

KOLONATY

[*Again warming to his subject*]

Wait. Against that, Baron Emmerich Prus protested that the donation of the aforesaid property was not recorded in the land record, that the deceased did not leave behind any written will, but, that in eighteen twenty-seven, at his country estate, made an oral " last will " for the benefit of another person.

EMILIA

It isn't possible. What other person?

KOLONATY

There's the hitch, Madam. Wait, I'll read the whole thing. [*He climbs up the ladder by the pigeonhole file*] It is very amusing, you'll see. Here it is. [*He takes out the Gregor papers, sits down on the bottom step and quickly fingers them*] B-z-z-z. Here, " The record of

the life of the high-born city councilor nobleman: Prus, Joseph Ferdinand von Semonitz." Will: the record at death-bed which was signed by a priest, a doctor and a notary. Here — "The dying — in high fever — asked by the undersigned if he had some last wish, declared several times that the property of Loukov should go to Mr. Mach Gregor." To Mr. Mach, comma, Gregor. [*He puts back the papers*] — To some Mr. Mach, Madam — to some Gregor Mach — to a person then unknown and undiscoverable.

[*He remains seated on the ladder*]

EMILIA

That is a mistake. Pepi certainly meant Gregor, Ferdi Gregor.

KOLONATY

Apparently. But what is written is written. At that time the above-named Gregor protested that the word "Mach" appeared in the oral will only by some mistake of hearing or slip of the pen; that "Gregor" should have been the last name, not the first name, and so on; but *litera scripta valet.* And Emmerich Prus kept Loukov and the whole inheritance.

EMILIA

And Gregor?

KOLONATY

Gregor got nothing.

GREGOR

You see, Madam, this is called justice.

EMILIA

But why didn't Gregor get it?

KOLONATY

Well, dear lady, for various technical reasons and chiefly because neither Gregor Mach nor Ferdinand Karel Gregor was a blood relation of the deceased.

EMILIA

But wait. He was his son.

KOLONATY

Whose son?

EMILIA

Ferdinand Gregor was Pepi's son.

GREGOR

[*Jumping up*]

His son! How do you know that?

KOLONATY

[*Coming hastily down the ladder*]

His son? And who was the mother, please?

EMILIA

The mother was — her name was Ellian MacGregor, a singer at the Viennese court opera.

GREGOR

[*Excitedly*]

What did you say her name was?

EMILIA

MacGregor. You know, it is a Scotch name.

GREGOR

MacGregor, do you hear, Doctor? Mac. Mac. Not Mach. Do you understand?

KOLONATY

[*Still doubtful*]

Of course. But why, Madam, wasn't her son's name also MacGregor?

EMILIA

Well, because of his mother — Ferdi never knew his own mother.

KOLONATY

Ah, is that so? [*Coming closer to her*] And have you any proof of this?

EMILIA

I'm not sure. Please go on.

KOLONATY

Well, from that time the Loukov case has been going on, with some intervals, up to the present date. It has been carried on continuously for a hundred years between generations of the Pruses and the Gregors and with the excellent legal assistance of the Doctors Kolonaty. Thanks to their help, the last of the Gregors will lose it for good. Oddly enough, this very afternoon. So — that is all.

EMILIA

And is Loukov worth so much trouble?

GREGOR

I should say so.

KOLONATY

In the sixties coal was found on the Loukov property. The price cannot be estimated, even approximately — but let us say one hundred and fifty millions.

EMILIA

Anything more?

GREGOR

No, nothing more. That would be quite enough for me.

KOLONATY

Now, my dear lady, have you any more questions?

EMILIA

Yes. What do you need to win the case?

KOLONATY

[*With a touch of sarcastic humor*]

Well, of course, I should like best of all to have the true, written will.

EMILIA

And do you know of one?

KOLONATY

We found none.

EMILIA

That was careless.

KOLONATY

Unquestionably. [*He gets up*] Any more questions?

EMILIA

Yes. To whom does the old Prus house belong?

GREGOR

To my opponent, Jaroslav Prus.

EMILIA

And what are those cabinets where you put wills called?

GREGOR

Archives.

KOLONATY

Files.

EMILIA

Then listen. [*They approach her. She speaks rapidly in a low voice*] In the Prus house there used to be such a cabinet. Every drawer had a date and there Pepi used to put bills and other old papers. Do you follow me?

KOLONATY

Yes.

EMILIA

And on one of the drawers there was the date, eighteen hundred and sixteen. In that year Pepi met Ellian MacGregor during the Congress at Vienna.

KOLONATY

I see.

EMILIA

And in one of the drawers he hid all his letters from Ellian.

KOLONATY

[*Coming closer to her*]
And how do you know that?

EMILIA

You must not ask me.

KOLONATY

[*With an over-elaborate bow*]
Pardon me.

EMILIA

There are also letters from the managers and people like that, you know. In short, a lot of old papers.

KOLONATY

Yes.

EMILIA

Do you think they've been burned?

KOLONATY

Perhaps. It is quite possible.

EMILIA

Well, will you find out?

KOLONATY

Of course, provided Mr. Prus will allow me.

EMILIA

And if he doesn't?

KOLONATY

What can we do?

EMILIA

You will have to get the drawer open some other way. [*She stands close to him, looking him straight in the eyes*] Do you understand?

KOLONATY

Oh, yes, I suppose, at midnight with a rope ladder and a skeleton key and all that. My dear lady, you certainly have queer ideas about us lawyers.

EMILIA

But you must get it.

KOLONATY

Well, we shall see. Anything else?

EMILIA

If those letters are there you will find among them a big, yellow envelope.

KOLONATY

And in it?

EMILIA

The last will of Prus, written in his own hand and sealed.

[*Kolonaty and Gregor both leap to their feet*]

KOLONATY

My God!

GREGOR

Are you sure?

KOLONATY

[*Now for the first time carried away by Emilia's story*]
What's in it? What does it say?

EMILIA

Well, in it Pepi leaves the estate of Loukov to his illegitimate son Ferdinand, born in Loukov at such and such a time. I have forgotten the date.

KOLONATY

In those very words?

EMILIA

In those very words.

KOLONATY

And is the envelope sealed?

EMILIA

Yes.

KOLONATY

With the original seal of Joseph Prus?

EMILIA

Yes.

KOLONATY

Ah—— [*He looks at Emilia and laughs*] Thank you. [*He sits down*] Would you mind telling me, my dear lady, why you're making such fools of us?

EMILIA

Oh — you don't believe me?

KOLONATY

I should say not. Not a word.

GREGOR

I believe her. How can you tell ——?

KOLONATY

Be sensible. If the envelope is sealed how can anyone tell what is in it?

GREGOR

But ——

KOLONATY

In an envelope sealed for a hundred years.

GREGOR

Just the same ——

KOLONATY

And in a strange house. [*Losing his patience*] Don't be an idiot!

GREGOR

But I do believe her, and that's all.

KOLONATY

As you wish. My dear Miss Marty, you have an extraordinary weakness for telling stories. Do you suffer from it often?

GREGOR

Oh, stop.

KOLONATY

Very well. I won't say another word. Absolute secrecy, my dear lady.

GREGOR

[*Now quite enraged at the Doctor*]

And if you want to know, Doctor, I believe every word she said.

EMILIA

At least you are a gentleman.

GREGOR

And, therefore, either you go to his house and ask for the papers of eighteen-sixteen ——

KOLONATY

Or?

GREGOR

Or I am going to get the services of the first lawyer I find in the telephone book and shall hand over the case to him.

KOLONATY

[*Completely taken aback*]

—— For my sake!

GREGOR

All right.

[*He goes to the telephone and looks through the telephone book*]

KOLONATY

Stop this foolishness! We're friends, aren't we? I used to be your guardian.

GREGOR

Dr. Abeles, Alfred, two-seven-six-one.

KOLONATY

Man, don't take that fellow. That's my last advice, unless you want to be absolutely ruined.

GREGOR

[*At the telephone*]

Hello—two-seven-six-one?

KOLONATY

Don't disgrace us. You're not going to give our hereditary case to such ——?

GREGOR

Dr. Abeles? This is Albert Gregor speaking ——

KOLONATY

[*Snatching the receiver from his ear*]

Wait. I'll go.

GREGOR

To Prus?

KOLONATY

To the devil if you like, but you stay here.

GREGOR

Doctor, if you're not back in one hour I am going to call ——

KOLONATY

Shut up! I beg your pardon, my dear lady. And, if you please, don't make him entirely crazy.

[*Runs out*]

GREGOR

At last.

EMILIA

Is he really such a fool?

GREGOR

No. He's only practical. He doesn't know what to do with miracles. I always waited for a miracle, and you came. Oh, how can I thank you?

EMILIA

It isn't worth the words.

GREGOR

[*He sits down*]

You know, I'm almost certain that the will will be found. I don't know why I have such faith now [*he gazes up at her a moment in silence*] perhaps because you are so beautiful.

EMILIA

How old are you?

GREGOR

Thirty-four, Mademoiselle Marty. From my childhood I lived only to get those millions. You can't imagine what it was. I lived like a fool. I didn't know any better. If you hadn't come—

EMILIA

Debts?

GREGOR

Yes. [*He rises*] Tonight I would have shot myself, probably.

EMILIA

Nonsense!

GREGOR

[*More and more under her spell*]

I won't hide anything from you, dear lady. There was no help for me and all at once you came. Lord knows from where. Famous singer — a mysterious woman — to save me. [*She laughs*] Why do you laugh at me?

EMILIA

[*Pushing him back*]

You talk such rubbish!

GREGOR

But——? Dear lady, we are alone now. You're fascinating. Speak! Tell me everything!

EMILIA

What more? I've said enough.

GREGOR

This is a family matter. There are some family secrets. You know about them in some extraordinary way. In God's name, tell me everything.

EMILIA

[*Shaking her head*]

No.

GREGOR

You can't?

EMILIA

[*Walking away from him*]

I don't want to.

GREGOR

[*Following her*]

How do you know about those letters? How do you know about the last will? Where from? How long ago? Who told you all this? Don't you see, I've got to know what's behind it. Who are you? What does it all mean?

EMILIA

A miracle.

GREGOR

Yes, a miracle. But even a miracle has to be explained, or it's unbearable. Why did you come?

EMILIA

To help you, as you see.

GREGOR

Why do you want to help me? Why me? What is there in it for you?

EMILIA

That's my affair.

GREGOR

Mine, also, Mademoiselle Marty. If I am to owe this property — even my life — to you, what may I lay at your feet?

EMILIA

What do you mean?

GREGOR

What may I offer you, Miss Marty?

EMILIA

[*Playing with him*]

Oh, I see. You want to pay me — what do you call it? — a percentage.

GREGOR

Now, please. Use some other word. Call it gratitude. How could I spend ——?

EMILIA

I have enough myself.

GREGOR

Excuse me. Only a beggar could have enough. The rich, never.

EMILIA

Look here! You good-for-nothing boy, stop offering me money!

GREGOR

Excuse me. I'm afraid I don't know how to offer gifts. [*He gets down on his knees*] Lady, they call you the divine Marty, but in this world of ours, even a divinity would ask for a share. It's only right. Understand, I speak of millions.

EMILIA

You're giving it away already. Oh, you little fool!

[*She goes to the window and looks out*]

GREGOR

[*Getting up and coming to the front of the stage*]
Why do you speak to me as though I were a boy? I'd give half my inheritance if ——

EMILIA

Well?

GREGOR

It's unbearable how small I feel beside you!
[*Pause*]

EMILIA

[*Turning round*]
What is your name?

GREGOR

I beg your pardon?

EMILIA

What is your name?

GREGOR

Gregor.

EMILIA

The rest?

GREGOR

MacGregor.

EMILIA

But your first name, idiot?

GREGOR

Albert.

EMILIA

Your mother calls you Berti, doesn't she?

GREGOR

Yes, but my mother is dead.

EMILIA

Bah! [*She turns away in disgust*] Everyone is just dying.
[*There is a pause*]

GREGOR

What was Ellian MacGregor like?

EMILIA

At last, it has occurred to you to ask about her.

GREGOR

Do you know something about her? Who was she?

EMILIA

A great singer.

GREGOR

Was she beautiful?

EMILIA

She was.

GREGOR

Did she love my great-grandfather?

EMILIA

Yes, in her way.

GREGOR

Where did she die?

EMILIA

I don't know. Enough of this. One more thing ——

[*Pause*]

GREGOR

[*Coming near her*]

Emilia.

EMILIA

I am not Emilia to you.

GREGOR

[*In a sudden burst of passion*]

What am I to you? For God's sake, don't torture me. Don't play with me. You're a beautiful, fascinating woman. [*He takes her by the shoulders and gazes down into her face*] Listen, I understand you. [*She laughs*] No, don't laugh at me. Oh, you're wonderful — superb.

EMILIA

I'm not laughing, Berti. But don't be a fool!

GREGOR

I am a fool! And I'm glad! You've stirred me to the soul. Have you ever seen blood — running blood? The sight of it makes one savage — wild — drives a man to madness. Men must have gone mad that way over you. Listen — [*His hands slip up round her throat. There is menace in his voice*] I can't understand — I can't understand why someone hasn't taken hold of you — and strangled you!

[*His fingers close tighter and tighter round her throat. Emilia struggles and wrenches herself away*]

EMILIA

Ah, don't start that.

GREGOR

But I must speak. You are cold to me. That hurts. The moment you came in, you scorched me like a hot flame. What is it? You bring something terrible; has anyone ever told you that?— Emilia, do you know how beautiful you are?

EMILIA

[*In a tired way*]
Beautiful? No. Look!

GREGOR

Oh, God! What are you doing? What are you doing to your face? [*He steps back*] Emilia, don't do it! Stop! Now — you look old. [*Covering his eyes with his hands, he sinks back into a chair*] Terrible!

EMILIA

Now you see. Go, Berti. Leave me.
[*There is a pause*]

GREGOR

Excuse me. I was a — oh, I don't know what I am doing.

EMILIA

Berti, do I really look very old?

GREGOR

[*Lifting his head to look at her*]

No, not now. No, you are terribly beautiful.

EMILIA

Do you know what you could give me?

GREGOR

What?

EMILIA

You offered me yourself. Do you know what I want?

GREGOR

Everything I have is yours.

EMILIA

Listen, Berti. Do you know Greek?

GREGOR

No.

EMILIA

Well, then, give me the Greek papers. They're no use to you.

GREGOR

Greek papers?

EMILIA

The ones Ferdi got. You know, Berti. From your great-grandfather, Pepi Prus. They were just a remembrance —— Will you give them to me?

GREGOR

I don't know of any Greek papers.

EMILIA

Nonsense! You must have them. Pepi promised that he would give them to him. For the love of God, Berti, tell me you have them!

GREGOR

But I haven't them!

EMILIA

[*Turning sharply on him*]
Don't lie. You must have them.

GREGOR

[*Rising*]
I have not.

EMILIA

Fool! I want them. I have to have them, do you hear? You must find them!

GREGOR

Where are they?

EMILIA

How do I know? Look for them! Bring them here! Why, that is why I came here today, Berti.

GREGOR

Yes?

EMILIA

Where are they? For God's sake, think!

GREGOR

Hasn't Prus got them?

EMILIA

Take them away from him. Help me! Help me!

[*The telephone rings*]

GREGOR

Just a minute.

[*He answers the telephone*]

EMILIA

[*Sinking into a chair*]

Find them! Find them!

GREGOR

[*At the telephone*]

Hello. This is Dr. Kolonaty's office. He isn't here. Is there any message? This is Gregor speaking. Yes. All right. Good. Thank you very much. [*He hangs up the receiver*] That's over.

EMILIA

What?

GREGOR

The case of Gregor vs. Prus. The Supreme Court has brought in a verdict.

EMILIA

And?

GREGOR

I lost.

[*Pause*]

EMILIA

Couldn't your fool of a lawyer have held it up for a while?

[*Gregor shrugs his shoulders*]
But you can still appeal, can't you?

GREGOR
I don't know. I don't think so.

EMILIA
That's absurd! [*She goes over to him and speaks in a motherly way*] Listen, Berti, I'm going to pay your debts. Do you understand?

GREGOR
Why should you? I don't want you to.

EMILIA
Be quiet! I'm going to pay them and that is all there is to it. But you must help me find those Greek papers.

GREGOR
[*Again caught up by his desire*]
Emilia ——

EMILIA
[*Starting for the door*]
Call my car, please.
[*Dr. Kolonaty enters in great excitement, Baron Prus behind him*]

KOLONATY
We found it! We found it! [*He throws himself before Emilia on his knees*] Gracious lady, accept my apologies. I am a stupid old fool and you know everything.

PRUS

[*Shaking hands with Gregor*]

I congratulate you on finding the true will.

GREGOR

Please don't. You've just won the case yourself.

PRUS

But you are going to appeal?

KOLONATY

[*Rising*]

Of course, we will appeal.

PRUS

Will you introduce me, please?

KOLONATY

Pardon. Mademoiselle Marty — Baron Prus, my client's enemy.

[*The Baron steps forward, takes her outstretched hand and raises it to his lips*]

EMILIA

I am very pleased to meet you. Where are the letters?

PRUS

[*As though he did not understand*]

Letters?

EMILIA

From Ellian.

PRUS

Oh, I have them. Mr. Gregor need not trouble himself about them.

EMILIA

Will they come to him?

PRUS

If he inherits the property. As a remembrance of Miss —— [*He smirks at his intentional slip*] — er — his great-grandmother.

EMILIA

Listen, you will return those letters to me, won't you?

PRUS

Return? Have they ever been yours?

EMILIA

Oh, no. But Berti was going to give them to me.

PRUS

I see. [*And the Baron undoubtedly does see many things which have not been spoken*] And, now, for showing me what I have in my house, I should like to offer you this beautiful bouquet.

EMILIA

You are not very generous. Berti offered me ——

PRUS

A wagon-load?

EMILIA

No, but I don't know how many millions.

PRUS

And you took them?

EMILIA

Hardly.

PRUS

You did well. [*He looks at her intently*] Don't ever take anything you can't be sure of.

EMILIA

Ah — is there anything the matter?

PRUS

Well, perhaps just a little trifle. Is his great-grandfather Gregor the Ferdinand Gregor of the will? You know these lawyers are really very exact.

EMILIA

You need another little document?

PRUS

Just that.

EMILIA

[*Turning to Kolonaty*]

All right, Doctor, I shall send you something like that tomorrow morning.

KOLONATY

[*Who has been eagerly following the conversation*]

What? You have it? Gregor! We will win our case after all!

PRUS

Mademoiselle Marty, I think you had better take my gift.

EMILIA

[*Looking first at Gregor, then at Prus*]
Why?

PRUS

It's surer.

[*She takes the bouquet and, as Prus bows over her hand, the curtain falls*]

ACT II

[*The stage of a big theater, somewhat in disorder after the previous night's performance. Properties, scenery, rolled drops and lighting apparatus are left about the stage. In the front is a theatrical throne on a dais.*]

SCRUBWOMAN

[*Pausing in her work*]

I tell you that was glory. Did you see the flowers?

MECHANIC

I should say I did.

SCRUBWOMAN

As long as I've lived I never seen such glories. The people yelled. I thought they'd tear down the theater. And Marty had to go about fifty times to bow. The people wouldn't stop. Just as if they was crazy.

MECHANIC

Listen. She must have a lot of money.

SCRUBWOMAN

I should say so, Kudrana. Only think of the money them flowers cost. Look! Look! [*She points to a heap of flowers carelessly tossed into a corner*] There's another heap. She couldn't take them all away with her.

MECHANIC

Well, I came to listen a little while behind the stage, but you know I just tremble all over when she sings.

SCRUBWOMAN

I tell you this, Kudrana, I just cries. I listened, and all at once I wondered what was running down my cheeks, and there I was, crying.

[*Prus enters from the back. He wanders about as if looking for someone, then finally comes down to the Scrubwoman*]

SCRUBWOMAN

[*Getting up*]

Do you want to see someone?

PRUS

Isn't Mademoiselle Marty here? They told me at the hotel she'd gone to the theater.

SCRUBWOMAN

She's with the manager now, but she'll be back here. She left her things in her dressing room.

PRUS

Good. I'll wait.

[*He steps aside*]

SCRUBWOMAN

That's the fifth one. There's a whole string of 'em waiting for her.

MECHANIC

I can't get it into my head that such a woman can be bothered with men.

SCRUBWOMAN

[*With a knowing wag of the head*]
Oh, yes, there's no doubt about it, Kudrana.

MECHANIC

You don't say.

SCRUBWOMAN

What — what are you staring at?

MECHANIC

I can't get it into my head.
[*He goes "up stage" pausing to hear her reply, then goes off*]

SCRUBWOMAN

Of course she has! But you're too stupid to understand.
[*She picks up her pail and mop and disappears among the "flats" and "properties" at the back of the stage*]

KRISTINA

[*Entering from the left*]
Janek, come here. Janek, there's no one here.

JANEK

[*Timidly following her*]
Won't somebody throw me out?

KRISTINA

No one rehearses today. Oh, dear! Janek, I'm so unhappy!

JANEK

Why?

[*He tries to kiss her*]

KRISTINA

No, Janek, don't kiss me — please — I have other cares now. I mustn't think of you any more.

JANEK

But, Krista!

KRISTINA

Be sensible, Janek. If I'm to get anywhere, I must change my whole life. [*Very seriously*] Janek, if one thinks all the time about some one thing, and only about the same thing, it must come true, mustn't it?

JANEK

Of course.

KRISTINA

So, you see. I have to think only about my art. [*She mounts the throne and sits down*] Marty is marvelous, isn't she, Janek?

JANEK

She is, but ——

KRISTINA

You don't understand. It's her marvelous technique. I didn't sleep the whole night. I

lay on my back and wondered and wondered whether I should leave the theater or not. If I could know only just a little bit.

JANEK

But you do.

[*He follows her and sits on the arm of the throne*]

KRISTINA

Do you really think so? Do you think I ought to go on singing? Then everything would have to end between us. You understand. I should have to give all my time to the stage.

JANEK

But, Krista, a few minutes every day — twice a day — with me.

KRISTINA

That's just it. It isn't only a few minutes. Oh, it's terrible! You know, Janek, I think about you the whole day. Oh, what a nuisance you are! How can I do anything I ought to when I think about you all the time?

JANEK

And if you want to know, Krista, I — I — can think of nothing but you.

KRISTINA

It's all right for you. You don't have to sing, and, oh, listen, Janek, I've dreamed of triumphs and glories — so you mustn't hope.

JANEK

I will hope! I won't agree to this — I ——

KRISTINA

Please, Janek, don't make it more difficult. Be sensible, dear. I'd have to give up any serious study, and then, oh, I don't want to be a poor girl always — for your sake — and then, my voice is only being formed. I ought not to use it too much.

JANEK

Then I'll do the talking.

KRISTINA

No, wait! I have decided. It is all over between us, Janek. All over! [*Janek jumps up and is halfway off the stage before she continues*] . . . We're going to see each other only once a day.
[*He stops and turns round*]

JANEK

But ——

KRISTINA

Between times, we must be perfect strangers. I'm going to work terribly hard, Janek. To sing, to think, to learn and everything. You know, I'd love to be a great lady like Marty. Come here, you silly. There's room enough for you beside me. Nobody's looking. Do you think she loves someone?

JANEK

[*On the throne beside her*]
Who?

KRISTINA

She — Marty.

JANEK

Marty? Of course.

KRISTINA

You know, I don't understand. Why does she have to love someone when she's so great and famous? You don't know what it is when a woman loves. It is so degrading!

JANEK

It is not!

KRISTINA

You don't know anything about it! A woman doesn't think of herself any more. She follows him like a slave. She can't belong to herself. Oh, I could beat myself sometimes.

JANEK

But ——

KRISTINA

And then everybody's crazy about Marty — everyone she looks at. But it doesn't mean anything to her.

JANEK

Not everyone.

KRISTINA

I'm — afraid of her.

JANEK

Krista!

[*He tries to steal a kiss*]

KRISTINA

But, Janek, if somebody should see us!

[*He kisses her. Prus enters and watches them*]

PRUS

I'm not looking.

JANEK

[*Jumping up*]

Father!

PRUS

You don't have to run away. [*He comes nearer*] Miss Kristina, I am very pleased to meet you. I am sorry to say I haven't known you before. The boy might at least have boasted to me about you.

KRISTINA

[*Stepping down from the throne and shielding Janek*]

Please, Mr. Prus just came to — to ——

PRUS

Mr. Prus?

KRISTINA

Mr. — Mr. ——

PRUS

He's only Janek, and not Mr. Prus. How long has he been running after you?

KRISTINA

For a year.

PRUS

Well, well! But you mustn't take him too seriously. I know him. And you, young man — I don't want to disturb you, but this is really a little — a little public, isn't it?

JANEK

[*Bravely stepping up to his father*]

Father, if you think you'll embarrass me — you're mistaken.

PRUS

That's right. A man should never be embarrassed.

JANEK

And I never thought that you would spy on me this way.

PRUS

Bravo, Janek — only don't give in.

JANEK

I mean what I say. There are matters into which I forbid — which — are no one's ——

PRUS

Quite so, my friend. Shake hands.

[*His tone is harsh*]

JANEK

[*Hiding his hands behind his back*]

No, Father.

PRUS

[*Stretching out his hand*]
Well?

JANEK

Father?
[*He stretches out his hand timidly*]

PRUS

[*Shaking hands*]
That's the way.

JANEK

[*His face wrinkles up. He tries to look strong. Finally he cries out and crumples up completely*]
Oh!

PRUS

[*Letting him go*]
Well, hello. [*He laughs*] He can stand a lot.

KRISTINA

[*Almost crying*]
That is brutal.

PRUS

[*Takes her hands lightly*]
Those golden hands.
[*Vitek runs in*]

VITEK

Kristina! Aha! here you are. [*He stops*] Baron Prus!

PRUS

Don't let me disturb you.
[*He steps aside*]

KRISTINA

What is it, Papa?

VITEK

You're in the newspapers, Kristina! They've written about you in the newspapers! In the write-up along with Marty. Imagine, along with Marty!

KRISTINA

Show it to me!

VITEK

Here. "The part of Celia was sung for the first time by Miss Vitek." That's pretty nice, isn't it?

KRISTINA

And what's all the rest?

VITEK

You can just imagine — nothing but Marty. As if there were no one else in this world except Marty.

KRISTINA

Look, Janek! Here is my name.

VITEK

Krista, who is that?

KRISTINA

Mr. Prus.

JANEK

Janek Prus.

VITEK

How did you happen to meet him?

JANEK

Your daughter was kind enough ——

VITEK

My daughter will tell me herself, thank you. Come, Krista.

[*He stalks off with Kristina*]

EMILIA

[*She speaks off-stage*]

Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen. Please let me go. [*She enters and sweeps down the stage to the throne. Seeing Prus*] What, another one?

PRUS

Oh, no, Mademoiselle Marty. I don't dare to congratulate you. I came for something else.

EMILIA

But you were in the theater last night?

PRUS

To be sure.

EMILIA

Well. [*She sits on the throne*] I don't want to see anyone else. I've had enough of it. Is that your son?

PRUS

Yes. Come here, Janek.

EMILIA

Come here, Janek, I want to see you. [*He steps up shyly*] You were in the theater last night?

JANEK

Yes.

EMILIA

Did you like me?

JANEK

Yes.

EMILIA

[*Sharply*]

Do you know how to say anything else but "Yes"?

JANEK

Yes.

EMILIA

Your son is stupid.

PRUS

I fear for him.

[*Gregor comes in with flowers*]

EMILIA

Oh, Berti, bring them here.

GREGOR

For last night.

EMILIA

Let me see. [*She takes the flowers and finds a jewel box hidden in them*] Take this back. It's nice of you to come. Thank you for the flowers. [*She takes a sniff of them and throws them carelessly on the pile with the others*] Did you like me?

GREGOR

No. Your singing hurts me. It is too perfect. And, at the same time ——

EMILIA

Well?

GREGOR

You seem bored when you sing. It is superhuman. It carries one away. But you remain cold — as if you were frozen.

EMILIA

Did you feel that way? Perhaps you are right. Well, I've sent the document to your old fool of a lawyer — the one about Ellian. How is the case getting on?

GREGOR

I don't know. I don't care about the case.

[*Vitek and Kristina enter and stand silently in the background*]

EMILIA

But you're already buying ridiculous things of the jewelers. You idiot! Take it back, right away — how did you manage to get it?

GREGOR

It's no business of yours.

EMILIA

You borrowed, didn't you? You spent the whole forenoon running from one money lender

to another, eh? [*She puts her hand in her handbag and pulls out a handful of money*] Here, take it. Quick!

GREGOR

What! Are you offering me money? What do you think I am?

EMILIA

[*She stands up and comes down towards him*]
Behave yourself or I shall pull your ears.

GREGOR

I hope you dare!

EMILIA

Will you only listen! Don't try to give me orders. Berti, don't make me cross. I'll teach you to run up debts. [*She boxes his ears*] Are you going to take it?

PRUS

[*To Gregor*]
In Heaven's name, put an end to this.

GREGOR

[*Pulling the money away from her*]
You have funny whims. [*He gives the money to Vitek*] Hand it over to the office — Mademoiselle Marty's account.

VITEK

Yes, certainly.

EMILIA

Certainly not! That is for him. Do you understand?

VITEK

Yes, certainly.

EMILIA

Were you in the theater last night? Did you like me?

VITEK

Of course, my lady. [*Attempting a compliment*] Quite a Strada.

EMILIA

Did you ever hear Strada sing? Listen. Strada shrieked. She had no voice.

VITEK

Well, Strada died a hundred years ago.

EMILIA

All the worse. You should have heard her. Strada! Why do people talk of Strada?

VITEK

I beg your pardon, I — of course I didn't hear her, but as history relates ——

EMILIA

[*Imperiously*]

Listen. History lies. I will tell you something. Strada shrieked and Carrona had a frog in her throat. Agajari was a goose and Faustina breathed like a balloon. That is history for you.

VITEK

You know best — in these matters concerning music.

PRUS

But you mustn't insult the French Revolution before Mr. Vitek.

EMILIA

Why?

PRUS

The French Revolution is his hobby.

EMILIA

What does he know about it?

PRUS

I don't know. Try asking him about Citizen Marat.

VITEK

[*Trying to bow himself away*]

Oh, no, please.

EMILIA

Marat — wasn't he a deputy? — Hands perspired — terribly.

VITEK

[*Greatly incensed*]

That's not true!

EMILIA

Oh, as I remember, he had hands like a frog. Br-r-r!

VITEK

Oh, no. That's a lie. It's not written anywhere.— I beg your pardon.

EMILIA

Well, I know. And what was the name of the big fellow with the pockmarks?

VITEK

Which one, please?

EMILIA

The one who had his head cut off.

VITEK

Danton?

EMILIA

Exactly! He was still worse.

PRUS

Why?

EMILIA

Oh, his teeth were completely decayed. Disgusting man!

[*Everyone except Vitek laughs*]

VITEK

Wait. Don't talk that way, please. That isn't historical. Danton — Danton did not have decayed teeth. That cannot be proved. And it doesn't matter the least — not the least bit.

EMILIA

Why doesn't it matter? It is disgusting.

VITEK

Now, please. You mustn't speak this way of

Danton — I beg your pardon — but if you talk like that nothing noble will be left in history.

EMILIA

[*Rising to full height and speaking almost like an oracle*]
There was nothing noble in history.

VITEK

What?

EMILIA

There never was anything very noble. *I* know.

VITEK

But Danton?

EMILIA

Just look at that — this man wants to quarrel with me.

PRUS

Insolent!

EMILIA

Oh, no. He's quite harmless.
[*Vitek draws back, muttering to himself*]

GREGOR

Shall I bring in some more people so you can be rude to them?

EMILIA

Not necessary. They will come of their own accord — on all fours.

KRISTINA

Janek, let's go.

EMILIA

[*Yawning*]
Aren't they a pair, those two? I wonder if they've reached paradise?

VITEK

I beg your pardon?

EMILIA

I wonder if they have ——

VITEK

Certainly not!

EMILIA

[*Calmly*]
But why not? Who'd grudge them the pleasure?

VITEK

[*Piteously*]
Krista, it isn't true, is it?

KRISTINA

[*In confusion*]
But, Papa, how can you?

EMILIA

Stop it, you fools. What wasn't will be. [*A weary tone creeps into her voice*] And then you'll find it wasn't worth it — at all.

PRUS

What is worth it, then?

EMILIA

[*With a faraway look in her eyes. To herself*]
Nothing — nothing at all.

[*An old gentleman with a bouquet slowly makes his way forward. His dress is that of a man about town of a past generation. His mind, no longer vigorous, dwells in the past. Senility has laid its hand on him*]

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Offering Emilia the flowers*]
Allow me, allow me.

EMILIA

[*Rousing herself*]
Now who is it?

HAUK-SENDORF

Lady, dear lady, allow me to — [*He kneels before the throne*] Dear lady, you look — you look — [*He sobs*] Will you excuse ——

EMILIA

[*To the others*]
What's happened to him?

HAUK-SENDORF

You — you look — so — so much like her.

EMILIA

Like whom?

HAUK-SENDORF

Eugenie. Eugenie Montez.

EMILIA

[*She starts and gets up*]
What?

HAUK-SENDORF

Eugenie. I — I knew her — lady — it is — it is fifty years ago.

EMILIA

[*Trying to cover her confusion*]
Who is this great fool?

PRUS

Hauk-Sendorf.

EMILIA

[*To herself*]
Hauk-Sendorf — Max? [*She descends from the throne*] Oh, yes, won't you get up?

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Rising*]
May I — may I call you Eugenie?

EMILIA

[*In the kind tone one uses to children*]
You may call me anything you like. So I look like her?

HAUK-SENDORF

Look like her? Dear lady, yesterday — yesterday in the theater I thought — I thought that it was she — my Eugenie — the voice — the eyes — she used to be so beautiful — Good God! And the forehead — it startled me. [*He pauses and stands back to look at her*] But you are taller.

EMILIA

Taller? Perhaps not.

HAUK-SENDORF

A good deal taller — Allow me. Eugenie reached me — here. I used to kiss her on her forehead.

EMILIA

And that was all?

HAUK-SENDORF

Eh? Oh — You are quite like her! Dear lady, may I give you these flowers?

EMILIA

Thanks.

HAUK-SENDORF

I could look at you forever.

EMILIA

But sit down now, dear. Berti, a chair.
[*She sits down on the throne*]

JANEK

I will get one.
[*He runs after a chair*]

KRISTINA

Not there!
[*She runs after him*]

PRUS

[*To Hauk-Sendorf*]
Cher comte.

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Steps across to him*]

Well, well, well! Baron Prus! Pardon me — I didn't see you. How pleased I am. How are you?

PRUS

How are you?

HAUK-SENDORF

And how is your case? Did you get rid of that fellow?

PRUS

Oh, no. Allow me, Gregor, to introduce you.

HAUK-SENDORF

Is that Mr. Gregor? I am so pleased to meet you. How are you?

GREGOR

Well, thank you.

[*Janek and Kristina bring chairs*]

EMILIA

Sit down, Max.

HAUK-SENDORF

Thank you very much.

EMILIA

You sit down, too, Baron. Berti can sit on my lap.

GREGOR

Too kind of you.

EMILIA

If you don't want to, you can stand up.

HAUK-SENDORF

Beautiful, divine lady. On my knees I beg your pardon.

EMILIA

Why?

HAUK-SENDORF

I'm an old fool. How could a woman long since dead concern you?

EMILIA

Is she dead?

HAUK-SENDORF

Yes.

EMILIA

Now, that's too bad.

HAUK-SENDORF

She has been dead for fifty years. I used to love her then — fifty years ago.

EMILIA

Yes?

HAUK-SENDORF

They used to call her Gitana. You know — a gypsy. And she was a gypsy. They used to call her la chula negra. That is, down there in Andalusia. At that time I was in the Embassy at Madrid. Fifty years ago — eighteen seventy.

EMILIA

Yes?

HAUK-SENDORF

Do you know, she sang and danced in the market places. [*The old man loses himself in his memories*] Alza! Ola! Lord! How the whole world used to go crazy about her! Vaya. Gitana there with the castanets, you see. I was young then, and she was ——

EMILIA

—— a gypsy.

HAUK-SENDORF

Quite so. A gypsy. Nothing but fire. Ah, God! One cannot forget. Would you believe that a man never comes to his senses? I've been a fool ever since.

EMILIA

Oh.

HAUK-SENDORF

I'm an idiot, lady. I am Hauk the idiot — No! — What's the word?

PRUS

Feeble-minded?

HAUK-SENDORF

Quite so. [*He nods a thanks to the Baron*] Feeble-minded. I left everything there with her. I didn't live afterwards. It was just half living without her. But come! [*He rises unsteadily*

and, posturing as for a dance, plays imaginary castanets] Salero. Dios mio. How much you look like her. Eugenie, Eugenie!
[*He cries*]

PRUS

Hauk, be careful.

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Coming to himself*]
I beg your pardon. I ought to be leaving.

EMILIA

I shall see you again, Max?

HAUK-SENDORF

Quite so. I shall see you again? Allow me to present my compliments. Oh, when I look at you like this ——

EMILIA

[*Suddenly rising and hurrying down the steps, comes close to him*]
Kiss me.

HAUK-SENDORF

What, eh?

EMILIA

Besa me, bobo, bobazo!
(Kiss me. You big simpleton!)

HAUK-SENDORF

Jesús mil veces, Eugenia.
(By a thousand heavens, Eugenia!)

EMILIA

Animal, un besito!
(Stupid! Just a tiny kiss!)

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Kissing her*]
Eugenia, moza negra — niña — querida — carísima ——
(Eugenia, my little black-eyed girl — dearie — beloved — darling.)

EMILIA

Chite, tonto! Quita! Fuera!
(Hush, fool — let go, please — go! Silly.)

HAUK-SENDORF

Es ella, es ella! Gitana endiablada, ven conmigo, pronto!
(It is she, it is she! My fiery gypsy. Come with me now!)

EMILIA

Ya no soy. Loco! Ahora callate! Vaya! Hasta mañana, entiendes?
(Not yet, idiot! Now keep quiet. [*Trying to get him to go*] Go! Tomorrow, do you understand, tomorrow?)

HAUK-SENDORF

Vendré, vendré, mis amores!
(I shall come, my love, I shall come.)

EMILIA

Vaya!
(Be gone.)

HAUK-SENDORF

Ay por Dios! Cielo de Dios, es ella! Si es ella! Eugenia ——
(Good Lord! By all that's holy, it *is* she! Yes, it is she — Eugenia ——)

EMILIA

[*Pushing him*]
Caramba, vaya! Fuera!
(Caramba! Go! Get out!)

HAUK-SENDORF

Vendré! Madre de Dios, ella misma!
(I shall come. Mother of God, it's *she* and no mistake!)
[*Goes out*]

EMILIA

[*Gayly*]
The next one. Who wants anything from me?

VITEK

I beg your pardon, would you sign your photograph for me — that is, for Kristina?

EMILIA

Nonsense! But I will do it for Kristina. A pen! [*She signs*] So good-by.

VITEK

[*Bows*]
A thousand thanks.
[*He goes away with Kristina*]

EMILIA

The next one. Anyone else?

GREGOR

I wait till you're alone.

EMILIA

Another fool. Well, I am going.

PRUS

[*Stepping up*]
Just one minute, please.

EMILIA

Do you want something?

PRUS

[*With a slight bow*]
It would seem so.

EMILIA

[*Yawning*]
All right, out with it.

PRUS

I wanted only to ask you — you seem to know so many things about Joseph Prus.

EMILIA

Perhaps.

PRUS

Do you happen to have heard a certain name?

EMILIA

What name?

PRUS

Let's say — Makropoulos.

EMILIA

[*Jumping up*]
What?

PRUS

[*Rising*]
Do you know anything about Makropoulos?

EMILIA

[*Trying to compose herself*]
No — no. It is the first time I have heard it. Oh, go away. Go! Let me alone.

PRUS

[*Bowing*]
I am extremely sorry.

EMILIA

[*To Prus*]
Not you. You wait. Where's Janek? Let him go. [*Janek leaves. To Gregor*] What do you want?

GREGOR

I want to talk with you.

EMILIA

I've no time for you just now.

GREGOR

I must talk to you.

EMILIA

Please, Berti, let me alone. Go, dear — now. You can come back later if you want to.

GREGOR

I will come back.
[*With a slight bow to Prus, he leaves*]

EMILIA

At last.

PRUS

Excuse me, Madam. I didn't know that name would touch you so.

EMILIA

What do you know about the Makropoulos paper?

PRUS

That's what I'm asking you.

EMILIA

What do you know about the Makropoulos paper?

PRUS

Dear lady, won't you please sit down. Perhaps it will be a rather long story. [*They both sit down*] First of all, may I ask a very intimate question — perhaps too intimate a question? [*Emilia nods slightly*] Have you any — particular personal interest in Mr. Gregor?

EMILIA

No.

PRUS

Are you very anxious to have him win the case?

EMILIA

No.

PRUS

Thank you. [*He leans back a moment*] I don't want to inquire further. How do you know what is in the locked closets of my house? It is apparently your secret.

EMILIA

Yes. Well?

PRUS

You knew that there were certain letters. You knew that there was Prus's last will. Even that it was sealed. By the way, did you know that there was something else, besides?

EMILIA

[*Excitedly getting up*]
You found something there? What was it?

PRUS

I don't know. That is what I'm asking you.

EMILIA

You don't know what it is?

PRUS

Do you?

EMILIA

No.

PRUS

I thought that Kolonaty told you. Or Gregor.

EMILIA

Not a word.

PRUS

Well, there was a sealed letter, and on it, in the handwriting of Joseph Prus, "For the hands of my son Ferdinand." Nothing more. That was with the last will.

EMILIA

And you didn't open it?

PRUS

No. It doesn't belong to me.

EMILIA

Then give it to me.

PRUS

[*Rising*]
To you! Why to you?

EMILIA

Because I want it. Because — because ——

PRUS

Well?

EMILIA

Because I have a certain right to it.

PRUS

May I ask what right?

EMILIA

No.

[*She walks away*]

PRUS

Hm! It appears — another secret of yours.

EMILIA

[*She turns and comes back*]

Yes — Will you give it to me?

PRUS

No.

EMILIA

Very well. Then Berti shall give it to me. It belongs to him, anyway.

PRUS

We'll see. Tell me, what's in the envelope?

EMILIA

No. What do you know about the Makropoulos paper?

PRUS

Another question — What do you know about Ellian MacGregor?

EMILIA

You have her letters.

PRUS

Perhaps you know more about it. Do you know anything else about that — courtesan?

EMILIA

[*In a cold fury*]
I beg your pardon!

PRUS

But, dear lady ——

EMILIA

How do you dare? How dare you talk that way?

PRUS

What's the matter? How can a woman of that sort, who lived a hundred years ago, concern you?

EMILIA

That's so — She doesn't .[*She sits down*] She was a courtesan, then?

PRUS

I read her letters. She was a remarkable type of woman.

EMILIA

Oh, you shouldn't have read them.

PRUS

There are certain allusions to — extraordinary intimacies — I am not a lad, but I must confess — that her experiences in certain things ——

EMILIA

Give me those letters.

PRUS

Perhaps you are interested — in those intimate relations.

EMILIA

Perhaps.

[*She turns and walks up to the throne and sits down*]

PRUS

[*Following her*]

You know what I should like to know?

EMILIA

Well?

PRUS

What you are like in love.

EMILIA

You mean things of — intimate relations?

PRUS

Perhaps.

EMILIA

Perhaps I remind you of Ellian.

PRUS

God forbid!

[*He turns and steps quickly off the dais*]

EMILIA

[*Lightly*]

Well, she was only an adventuress — licentious — that's all.

PRUS

What was her real name?

EMILIA

Ellian MacGregor. You have it on those letters.

PRUS

I beg your pardon, there is only E. M. Nothing more.

EMILIA

That, of course, means Ellian MacGregor.

PRUS

Oh no. [*Watching her closely*] It might serve just as well for other names; for instance, Emilia Marty, Eugenie Montez or a thousand other names.

EMILIA

But it is Ellian MacGregor, the Scotch singer.

PRUS

[*Slowly with emphasis on each word*]
Or, more probably — Ellina Makropoulos, the Greek from Crete.

EMILIA

Aha! Damnation!

PRUS

Ah, hah! You knew about it, then?

EMILIA

Please; leave me in peace. [*She comes down the steps to him*] In God's name, how do you know all this?

PRUS

Very simple. In the last letter something is said about a Ferdinand Gregor, born in Loukov, November twentieth, eighteen hundred and sixteen. I found out yesterday, and at three o'clock this morning the Dean of Loukov led me with a candle to the birth records. Poor man, he had to go in his nightshirt. And there I found it.

EMILIA

Found what?

PRUS

A birth record. This. [*He takes out a note book and reads*] "Nomen infantis Ferdinand Makropoulos dies nativitatis, November twentieth, eighteen hundred and sixteen, thorus illegitimate. Father left out. Mother, Ellina Makropoulos, born in Crete."

EMILIA

You don't know anything more?

PRUS

Nothing. But that is enough.

EMILIA

Poor Gregor! You will keep Loukov now, won't you?

PRUS

At least, so long as Mr. Makropoulos doesn't come to claim it.

EMILIA

And the sealed envelope?

PRUS

Oh, that will be put aside for him safely.

EMILIA

And if Mr. Makropoulos does not come?

PRUS

Then it will remain sealed and no one will get it.

EMILIA

Then he will come. Do you understand? And you will lose Loukov.

PRUS

As it will please God.

EMILIA

How can you be so stupid? [*Pause*] Come, give me the envelope.

PRUS

Why do you keep asking me for the envelope?

EMILIA

Makropoulos will come and get it.

PRUS

Hm! Who is he? Where do you keep him hidden?

EMILIA

Do you really want to know? It is Berti Gregor.

PRUS

What! He again?

EMILIA

Yes. Ellina Makropoulos and Ellian MacGregor were one and the same person. MacGregor was her stage name. Do you understand?

PRUS

Perfectly. And Ferdinand Gregor was her son?

EMILIA

Yes.

PRUS

Why wasn't his name Makropoulos, then?

EMILIA

Because Ellian wanted that name to disappear from the world.

PRUS

[*With an unbelieving smile*]

Well, let it be so.

[*He sits down*]

EMILIA

You don't believe me?

PRUS

I didn't say that. I don't even ask how you know all this.

EMILIA

Oh, good Lord! I've kept it a secret. I will tell you, Prus, but you must keep it to yourself. Ellina — Ellina Makropoulos — is my aunt.

PRUS

[*In astonishment*]
Your aunt?

EMILIA

Yes. My mother's sister. Now you know everything.

PRUS

[*Ironically*]
Of course, that explains it very nicely.

EMILIA

You understand?

PRUS

[*Getting up*]
It's too bad it isn't true, Mademoiselle Marty.

EMILIA

Do you mean to say I am lying?

PRUS

I am sorry to say — yes. Had you said that she was a great-grandmother of yours, it would have been better proof.

EMILIA

Yes, you are right. [*She goes up to the throne and sits. She extends her hand to Prus.*] Good-by.

PRUS

[*Following her, he kneels in mock homage and kisses her hand*]
May I express my deep admiration for you?

EMILIA

Thank you.

[*Prus starts to leave*]

Wait a moment. What would you sell that sealed envelope to me for?

PRUS

[*Turning round*] Pardon?

EMILIA

I'll buy those letters. I'll give you as much as you want.

PRUS

I beg your pardon, I cannot consider it here — and with you. Will you please send somebody else to me?

EMILIA

Why?

PRUS

So that I may kick him downstairs.

[*With a slight bow he leaves — Emilia sits without moving, her eyes closed — Gregor enters. He remains standing in silence*]

EMILIA

[*After a while*]

Is it you, Berti?

GREGOR

Why do you keep your eyes closed? You look as if you were suffering. What is the matter?

EMILIA

I am tired. Speak softly.

GREGOR

Softly? I warn you, if I speak softly I won't know what I am saying — I shall say foolish things. Do you hear, Emilia? I love you. I am mad. I love you — you don't laugh? I wanted you to get up and box my ears. I would have loved you the more for it. I love you. What — what is the matter?

EMILIA

It is cold, Berti. Everyone — everything — is cold.

GREGOR

Yes. You are cold to me but it makes me happy. Even that — I would like to strangle you when you torture me. I would like —— Ah, I am a fool, Emilia. Some day I will kill you. In you there is something awful. You are bad, low.

EMILIA

No, Berti.

GREGOR

Yes. Nothing means anything to you. Cruel, cold — as cold as the dead. [*Softly*] Listen — it is hell to love you. But I do. I love you so much I could tear the flesh from my body!

EMILIA

Do you like the name Makropoulos?

GREGOR

Stop. Don't play with me. I would give my life if I could, for you. [*He sinks down on the bottom step of the dais*] You can do with me whatever you want — whatever you want. I am lost, Emilia.

EMILIA

Then listen to me. Go to your lawyer and tell him to give you the document I sent him.

GREGOR

It is false?

EMILIA

No, Berti. I swear on my soul it isn't. But we must have another one — with the name Makropoulos. Wait. I will explain to you. Ellian ——

GREGOR

Never mind. I've had enough of your tricks.

EMILIA

No. Wait. You want to be rich, Berti. I want you to be rich.

GREGOR

And will you love me?

EMILIA

Now, stop that! Berti, you promised to get the Greek papers for me. Prus has them. Do you hear? But first you must get the inheritance.

GREGOR

Will you love me?

EMILIA

Never. Do you understand? Never.

GREGOR

[*Collapsing at her feet*]
I will kill you, Emilia.

EMILIA

Nonsense! I could say four words to you and it would all be over. Look! Look! [*She rises*] You'd like to kill me. Do you see the scar on my shoulder? [*She bares her shoulder*] Another one wanted to kill me. Am I made only for your killing?

GREGOR

I love you.

EMILIA

Then kill yourself, you fool! But what will it come to? Your love? Oh, if you knew. If you knew how funny you are, you child. [*Her voice drops*] If you knew how tired I am. If you knew how it's all the same to me. Oh, if you knew!
[*She falls back in the throne*]

GREGOR

What is the matter with you?

EMILIA

Unhappy Ellina!

GREGOR

Come here, Emilia. We are going away. No one ever loved you so much as I — I know —— There is something desperate in you — something terrible, Emilia. But I am young and strong and I can bring love to you. Then you can forget and throw me away. Do you hear, Emilia? [*Emilia has fallen asleep — she breathes heavily. Gregor rises in excitement*] What is it? She's asleep. Are you fooling? [*He stretches out his hands*] Emilia.

[*He bends over her — The Scrubwoman enters and coughs warningly and severely*]

GREGOR

Who is it? Oh! The lady fell asleep. Don't wake her.

[*He kisses Emilia's hand and hurries off*]

SCRUBWOMAN

[*Coming near Emilia and silently looking at her*]

I am kind of sorry for her.

[*Shaking her head, she walks slowly away — Janek enters from the back of the stage. He comes down by the throne and stares at Emilia*]

EMILIA

Ah! Is it you, Berti?

JANEK

No, please. It is just Janek.

EMILIA

[*Sitting up*]
Janek! Come here, Janek. Would you like to do something for me?

JANEK

Yes, I would.

EMILIA

Anything I want you to?

JANEK

Yes.

EMILIA

Something big, Janek? An heroic deed?

JANEK

Yes.

EMILIA

And will you ask for something as a reward?

JANEK

Oh, no!

EMILIA

Come nearer. You know, you are very nice. Listen. Your father has a sealed envelope and on it is written, "For the hands of my son Ferdinand." It's either in his desk or in his safe or — I don't know where.

JANEK

Yes?

EMILIA

Will you bring it to me?

JANEK

Will Father give it to me?

EMILIA

No, he won't. You'll have to take it.

JANEK

That isn't possible.

EMILIA

Oh! Are you afraid of your father?

JANEK

I'm not afraid, but ——

EMILIA

But, Janek, on my honor, it is just a remembrance — a matter of sentiment — without any value — I'd like so much to have it.

JANEK

I — I will try.

EMILIA

You promise?

[*Prus enters from a shadow*]

PRUS

You needn't trouble yourself, Janek. It is in the safe.

JANEK

Father, again.

PRUS

Go! [*Janek hurries out. To Emilia*] Purely by accident, I swear. I thought he was hanging round the theater because of Kristina, but——

EMILIA

And why are you hanging round the theater?

PRUS

I was waiting — for you.

EMILIA

[*Stepping nearer to him*]
To give me that envelope?

PRUS

It isn't mine to give.

EMILIA

But — you will bring it to me?
[*She comes close to him. Her lips almost touching his*]

PRUS

Ah! When?

EMILIA

Tonight?

PRUS

Tonight.
[*He bows over her hand*]

End of Act II

ACT III — SCENE I

[*The sitting room of a hotel suite. At the left is a window; and on the right is a door into the corridor. In the center is a curtained entrance into Emilia's bedroom.*

Emilia comes out of the bedroom in negligée, followed by Prus in evening clothes, tying his tie. Prus, without a word, sits down on the right. Emilia goes to the window, pulls up the curtain and looks out.]

EMILIA

A gray dawn. [*She turns back to Prus*] Well? [*There is a pause in which neither moves*] Give it to me. [*There is another pause; then she speaks sharply to him*] Do you hear? Give me that envelope.

[*Prus reaches inside his coat for a leather wallet, takes out a sealed envelope and places it on the table. Emilia grabs the envelope and hurries to her dressing table. She sits down, lights a lamp, looks at the seal, hesitates, then quickly cuts it open with a hairpin and pulls out a faded yellow manuscript. With a gasp of joy she quickly folds and hides it in her bosom. She rises*]

EMILIA

Good!

PRUS

[*After a moment's silence; quietly*]
You have robbed me.

EMILIA

[*With a sneer*]
You had — just what you wanted.

PRUS

You have robbed me. As cold as ice. As if I were holding a corpse. [*He shudders*] And for that, I have given you these papers that didn't belong to me. A nice business.

EMILIA

Are you sorry you gave me the sealed envelope?

PRUS

I'm sorry I met you. I should not have given it to you. Just as if I stole it! Terrible . . . terrible!

EMILIA

Do you want some breakfast?

PRUS

I want nothing. [*He goes over to her*] Let me look at you. I don't know what was in the envelope. Perhaps it is of some value. But — even if it had only the value of being sealed — only the value — that I didn't know what was in it.

EMILIA

Would you like to spit into my face?

PRUS

No. It is myself I blame.
[*Knocking is heard*]

EMILIA

[*Going to the door*]
Who is it?

CHAMBERMAID

[*Outside*]
It is I, Madam.

EMILIA

Come in. [*She unlocks the door. To Prus*] Won't you have something to eat?

CHAMBERMAID

[*Entering in her kimono, out of breath*]
Please, Madam, isn't Baron Prus here?

PRUS

[*Turning round*]
Yes, what is it?

CHAMBERMAID

One of your servants is outside. He wants to speak to you. He says it's something very important.

PRUS

How the devil did he know I was here? Tell him to wait. No. Hold on. I'll go. [*To Emilia*] Just a minute. [*He leaves*]

EMILIA

Will you comb my hair?
[*She sits down at the dressing table*]

CHAMBERMAID

[*Letting down Emilia's hair*]
Lord! How frightened I was. The porter came running to me and said that there was a servant here and that he had to see you. He was white as a sheet, that man. He couldn't even speak. It was as if something had hit him. Something must have happened, Madam.

EMILIA

[*Petulantly*]
Take care, you're hurting me.

CHAMBERMAID

Baron Prus is a great man, isn't he? I'd like to know what's happened. If you saw, Madam, how that servant trembled!

EMILIA

[*Not at all interested*]
Will you have some breakfast cooked for me?

CHAMBERMAID

And he had a letter or something in his hand. Shouldn't I go and see what it is?
[*Emilia yawns*]

EMILIA

What time is it?

CHAMBERMAID

After seven.

EMILIA

Put out the light and be quiet.

CHAMBERMAID

[*She puts out the light, talking all the while*]
And his lips were almost blue, the lips of that servant. I thought he was going to faint. [*She starts combing Emilia's hair*] And the tears in his eyes.

EMILIA

You're pulling my hair. You pull — give me the comb. Now look. See how much hair you've pulled out.

CHAMBERMAID

But my hands tremble so. Something must have happened.

EMILIA

I'm not going to let you pull my hair out, just because of that. Now, hurry up. [*Prus returns from the corridor with an unopened letter in his hand*] It didn't take you long. [*Prus searches with his hand for a chair to sit down*] What will you have for breakfast?

PRUS

[*Hoarsely*]
Send — that girl ——

EMILIA

Well, go then, until I ring. Go. [*Chambermaid goes out. After a pause*] Well, what?

PRUS

[*Quietly, but with great feeling*]
Janek shot himself.

EMILIA

[*Apparently not in the least moved*]
Go on.

PRUS

He's dead. His head — shattered beyond recognition.

EMILIA

Poor boy. Who told you?

PRUS

The servant. Janek — wrote this. They found it by his side — here, blood ——

EMILIA

What does he say?

PRUS

I'm afraid to open it. How — how — how could he have known that I was with you? Why did he send it here? Do you think that —

EMILIA

That he saw you?

PRUS

Why did he do it? Why — kill himself?

EMILIA

Read it.

PRUS

Won't you open it? [*He gets up and steps over to her*]

EMILIA

No.

PRUS

I think — that it has something to do with you —— Please open it.

EMILIA

Oh, no.

PRUS

You mean I must?

EMILIA

Yes.

PRUS

All right. [*He tears open the envelope and reads the letter. Emilia goes back to her dressing table and begins to manicure her nails*] Oh! [*He drops into a chair. The letter flutters to the floor*]

EMILIA

How old was he?

PRUS

I understand. I understand.

EMILIA

Poor Janek.

PRUS

He loved you.

EMILIA

Ah.

PRUS

My only son. [*He covers his face and sobs*] He was eighteen — only eighteen. Janek, my boy. [*Raising his arms above his head*] God! God! I used to be too hard — too cold — I never was kind to him — I never praised him. And the boy adored me!

EMILIA

Didn't you know that?

PRUS

Oh, God! If he were only alive. How stupid to fall in love so senselessly! He saw me come here — he waited two hours at the door — then he went home and ——

EMILIA

[*Starting once more to comb her hair*]
Poor boy.

PRUS

And only eighteen. My Janek — my child — dead — past recognition — and he wrote: "Papa, I understand. But, Papa, be happy." [*He gets up and, for the first time, notices Emilia*] What are you doing?

EMILIA

[*With hairpins in her mouth*]
Combing my hair.

PRUS

Perhaps you — don't understand. Janek loved you and killed himself for you.

EMILIA

Well, so many kill themselves.

PRUS

And you can comb your hair?

EMILIA

Should I run around with my hair flying, just for that?

PRUS

[*Striding over to her with his hand upraised to strike*]

He killed himself for you! Don't you hear?

EMILIA

Well, is that my fault? Perhaps I ought to tear my hair for you, too. My maid pulls it enough.

PRUS

Stop! Or ——

[*He is about to strike when there is a knock on the door*]

EMILIA

Come in.

CHAMBERMAID

[*Opening the door*]

Mr. Hauk-Sendorf wishes to see you, Madam.

EMILIA

Bring him in.

PRUS

[*Almost speechless with amazement and anger*]
You — you will admit him — now — while I am here?

EMILIA

You can go in the other room for a while.

PRUS

Oh — you — you!
[*He goes — Hauk-Sendorf enters*]

EMILIA

Buenos dias, Max. Why so early?

HAUK-SENDORF

Sh-sh. [*He tiptoes over to her and kisses her on the neck*] Dress yourself quickly, Eugenie! We are going.

EMILIA

Where?

HAUK-SENDORF

Home. To Spain. My wife doesn't know. Don't you see, I can't go back to her now. *Por Dios, Eugenie.* Make haste.

EMILIA

Are you mad?

HAUK-SENDORF

No. I am being watched. They caught me once and sent me back. Sss, like baggage, you know. Eh? I want to run away. And you will take me away?

EMILIA

To Spain? What could I do there?

HAUK-SENDORF

Ola. You could dance, of course. *Dios mio,* little girl. How jealous I used to be. You will dance. *Sabe?* And I will clap my hands. [*He takes some castanets out of his pocket*] *Ay salero.* [*He sings*] La, la, la. [*He stops suddenly*] Who is crying here?

EMILIA

Oh, nobody.

HAUK-SENDORF

Sss. Someone was crying. A man's voice. Listen, *chica!*

EMILIA

Oh, yes. Somebody living next door. His son died, or something like that.

HAUK-SENDORF

Oh, I see. His son died. Oh, that is sad. Let us go, Gitana. See what I am taking along — jewels. Matilda's jewels. Matilda, my wife. Eh? She is old, you know. It is ugly to be old. It is terrible to be old. I was old once but since you came back, little one, I am only twenty years old. Eh? You don't believe?

EMILIA

Si, si, señor.

HAUK-SENDORF

And you don't get older. Listen. One

shouldn't get old. You know, the foolish have a long life. Oh, I shall live a long time. And as long as one enjoys love —— [*He shakes the castanets*] Enjoy love! La, la, la, la. Ssh, Gypsy, will you go?

EMILIA

Yes.

HAUK-SENDORF

A new life, isn't it? We will start again from twenty, little girl! You know, delight — paradise! Aha, do you remember, only just remember. All the rest is nothing. Nina, shall we go? Nina, shall we go?

EMILIA

Yes, come along, *chu cho.* [*Someone knocks*] Come in.

CHAMBERMAID

Mr. Gregor wishes to see you.

HAUK-SENDORF

What does he want here? *Dios mio.* Let's run away.

EMILIA

Just wait.

[*Gregor, Kolonaty, Vitek and Kristina enter*]

Good morning, Berti. Who are with you, please?

GREGOR

You're not alone?

HAUK-SENDORF

Ah, Mr. Gregor, what a pleasure!

GREGOR

[*Pushing Hauk-Sendorf aside he brings Kristina across to Emilia*]

Look into this child's eyes! Do you know what's happened?

EMILIA

Janek, Janek.

GREGOR

And do you know why?

EMILIA

Baa!

GREGOR

That boy is on your conscience!

EMILIA

And is that why you are dragging people here with a lawyer?

GREGOR

Not only for that. Don't be so impertinent, if you please.

EMILIA

Well, will you listen to that! What do you want?

GREGOR

You will see. What is your name, anyway?

EMILIA

Are you cross-examining me?

KOLONATY

Oh, no, Madam. Only a friendly chat.

GREGOR

Let me see, Vitek. [*He takes a photograph from Vitek*] Did you sign this photograph for Miss Kristina? Is that your signature?

EMILIA

It is.

KOLONATY

Very well. And now, did you send this paper to me yesterday? It is an authentic proclamation of Ellian MacGregor saying that she is the mother of Ferdinand Gregor. The date is 1836. Is that correct?

EMILIA

It is.

KOLONATY

[*Triumphantly*]

But it is written with fresh ink. Do you know what that means, eh? That is a false document, my much esteemed lady!

EMILIA

How do you know that?

GREGOR

Look, gentlemen! [*He wets his finger and runs over the paper*] It still smudges. What do you say to that?

EMILIA

Nothing.

GREGOR

It was written yesterday. Do you under-

stand? And with the same hand that signed this photograph. A very extraordinary handwriting.

KOLONATY

Like Greek. Upon my soul, this alpha ——

GREGOR

Did you write this paper or didn't you?

EMILIA

I won't be cross-questioned by you.

HAUK-SENDORF

But, gentlemen, gentlemen, permit me ——

[*He comes down and makes a feeble attempt to get between them and Emilia*]

KOLONATY

You keep out, Sir, keep out. These are very interesting matters, Madam. Can you tell us at least where you got this paper?

EMILIA

I swear that Ellian MacGregor wrote it.

KOLONATY

When? Yesterday morning?

EMILIA

That doesn't matter.

KOLONATY

That does matter, my dear lady. That matters very much. When did Ellian MacGregor die?

EMILIA

That's enough. I shall say nothing more.
[*She takes a few steps away and turns her back*]

PRUS

[*Coming out of the bedroom, quickly*] Will you gentlemen show me the paper?

KOLONATY

You?

GREGOR

You have been here? Emilia, what does this mean?

HAUK-SENDORF

My, my, my! Baron Prus. What a pleasure! How are you?

KOLONATY

Do you know that your son ——

PRUS

[*Coolly*]
Yes. That paper, if you please. [*Kolonaty hands it over to him*] Thank you.

GREGOR

[*Still near Emilia. In a low voice*]
What was he doing here? Tell me.

EMILIA

What right have you to ask?

GREGOR

The right of one who loves you.

PRUS

[*Laying down the paper and looking up*]
That writing is genuine.

KOLONATY

Well, well. So Ellian MacGregor wrote that?

PRUS

No. The Greek, Elina Makropoulos. It is the same handwriting that is in my letters. Unmistakably.

KOLONATY

But the signature here — is ——

PRUS

—— Elina Makropoulos. There was no such person as Ellian MacGregor, gentlemen. That letter is a mistake.

KOLONATY

Upon my word! And the similarity of the photograph?
[*He hands Prus the photograph*]

PRUS

[*Looking it over*]
Unmistakably the handwriting of Elina Makropoulos.

KOLONATY

Well, well. And it is genuine, the signature on this letter?

PRUS

Yes. Thank you. Excuse my interruption. [*He sits down at the side, with his head in his hands*]

KOLONATY

In God's name, who understands this now?

VITEK

Perhaps it is only an accident that the handwriting of Miss Marty is somewhat similar.

KOLONATY

Of course, Vitek. And the lady's arrival is also an accident and that falsification is also only an accident. And do you know what, Vitek? You'll fill yourself up on your accidents!

EMILIA

[*Suddenly turning on them*]

I should like to call your attention, gentlemen, to the fact that I plan to go away this morning.

GREGOR

Where to, may I ask?

EMILIA

Across the boundary.

KOLONATY

Dear lady, don't do that. You don't understand. You must stay of your own accord so that we shan't have to turn to — so that we shan't have to call in ——

EMILIA

The police —— You want to have me arrested?

GREGOR

Not yet. You still have a chance.

[*Knocking*]

EMILIA

Come in.

CHAMBERMAID

[*Sticking her head through the doorway*]

Two gentlemen are looking for Mr. Hauk-Sendorf.

HAUK-SENDORF

What's that? After me? I won't go. The devil! Don't let them in ——

VITEK

I will see them. [*He goes out*]

KOLONATY

[*Crossing to Kristina*]

Now, Kristina, don't cry. [*He puts his arm on her shoulder*] I'm so sorry.

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Going up to Kristina*]

My, my! Isn't she pretty? Let's see. For the love of God, don't cry!

GREGOR

[*Close to Emilia, in a low voice*]

There is an auto below. You will ride with me across the frontier or else ——

EMILIA

Ha, ha. Is that what you counted on?

GREGOR

I, or the police? Are you going?

EMILIA

No.

VITEK

[*Re-entering*]

It is a physician and another gentleman, waiting for Mr. Hauk-Sendorf. They are supposed to take him home.

HAUK-SENDORF

[*To Emilia*]

So, you see. Ho, ho. They have me already. [*To Vitek*] Won't you ask them to wait?

VITEK

I told them to.

GREGOR

Gentlemen, since Mademoiselle Marty doesn't intend to explain, we will be so bold as to look through her trunks and papers.

KRISTINA

No, you haven't the right, Gregor.

GREGOR

[*To Kolonaty*]

Shall we call the police, then?

KOLONATY

I wash my hands of the affair.

HAUK-SENDORF

Permit me, Mr. Gregor, as a gentleman ——

GREGOR

Behind the door your physician and the other man are waiting. Shall I invite them in?

HAUK-SENDORF

Oh, not that, please. But, Baron Prus, certtainly ——

PRUS

Do — with that woman — whatever you want to.

GREGOR

All right, let's start.

[*He goes to her desk*]

EMILIA

Let it alone! [*She opens the drawer of her dresser*] If you dare!

KOLONATY

[*Jumping to her and catching her arm*]

Oh, Madam!

[*He pulls a revolver out of her hand. She sinks into a chair*]

GREGOR

[*At the desk, without turning*]

What is it? She wanted to shoot?

KOLONATY

Yes, it's loaded. Gregor, let's leave this alone. Let me call someone in?

GREGOR

We can fix it up ourselves.

EMILIA

[*To Hauk-Sendorf*]

Max, will you permit it? And you are a gentleman!

HAUK-SENDORF

Cielo de mi. What am I to do?

EMILIA

[*To Hauk-Sendorf*]

Baa, you are old. [*To Prus*] Baron Prus, you are a gentleman, at least. You cannot permit ——

PRUS

I ask you not to speak to me.

KRISTINA

[*Sobbing*]

It is terrible, what you are doing to her. Let her alone.

KOLONATY

That is what I say, too, Kristina. What we are doing is unfair — cruel.

GREGOR

[*Throwing out a bunch of papers on the table*]

There, Madam. You're carrying a whole archive with you.

[*He goes into the bedroom*]

KOLONATY

[*Picking up one or two of the papers*]

That's something for you, Vitek. The daintiest papers. Don't you want to sort them?

EMILIA

Don't you dare to read them!

KOLONATY

Oh, dear Madam, I beg of you not to move. Otherwise I should have to threaten you with bodily harm and injury. Paragraph ninety-one of the criminal code.

EMILIA

And you are a lawyer.

KOLONATY

You see, I have acquired a taste for crime. I think that I always had a talent for it. Sometimes one doesn't recognize one's real abilities until old age. I want you to know I am a sort of Arsene Lupin.

VITEK

Permit me, Mademoiselle Marty. Where are you going to sing next?

[*He receives no answer*]

HAUK-SENDORF

Mon dieu, je suis desolé — desolé.

VITEK

And did you read the criticisms about yourself?

EMILIA

No.

VITEK

[*Taking some clippings out of his pocket*]

They are marvelous, Madam. For example, "A voice of extraordinary brilliance and power. Overpowering fullness of high tones. Serene certainty in singing," and so on. "The wonderful appearance evoked — incomparable dramatic interpretation. An achievement unique in the history of opera, and perhaps of operatic art as a whole in history." Madam, imagine! [*No one is listening to him, so he stops and begins to sort the papers*]

GREGOR

[*Returning from the bedroom with an armful of papers*]

There, Doctor, we have enough for a while. [*He throws the papers on the table*]

KOLONATY

With pleasure. [*He smells the papers*] They are full of dust, Madam. Vitek, the dust is historical.

GREGOR

I found a seal with the initials E. M. The same seal that is on the paper of Ellian MacGregor.

PRUS

[*Standing up*]

Let me see.

KOLONATY

[*Examining the papers*]

The devil, Vitek, here is the date, sixteen hundred and three!

PRUS

[*Reading the seal*]

It is the seal of Elina Makropoulos.

[*He sits down*]

KOLONATY

So, you see what one finds.

HAUK-SENDORF

But good Lord!

GREGOR

Mr. Hauk-Sendorf, don't you know this medallion? I think that your coat of arms is on it.

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Looking at the medallion*]

Yes — it is — I gave it to her, myself.

GREGOR

When?

HAUK-SENDORF

Well — in Spain — fifty years ago.

GREGOR

To whom?

HAUK-SENDORF

To herself — to Eugenie — Eugenie Montez.

KOLONATY

[*Looking up from the papers*]

Here is something Spanish. Do you know Spanish?

HAUK-SENDORF

Oh, yes. Let me see. He, he! Eugenie, this is from Madrid.

KOLONATY

What?

HAUK-SENDORF

From the police. Banishment — Ramera Gitana, who is called Eugenie Montez. Ha, ha, ha! I know! Because of that fight, wasn't it?

KOLONATY

I beg your pardon. [*He bows to Emilia; then continues his examination of the papers*] A passport. Elsa Muller, seventy-nine. Death certificate — of Ellian MacGregor, eighteen thirty-six. Look! Look! All jumbled up! Just wait, Madam, we will get to your own name. Ekaterina Myskin. Now, who is that?

VITEK

Ekaterina Myskin was a Russian singer in the forties.

KOLONATY

You know everything, man.

GREGOR

That's extraordinary. All the initials are E. M.

KOLONATY

Apparently, Madam collects only those initials. A special hobby, isn't it? Hello, what is this? "Dein Pepi." [*He steps over to Prus*] That is apparently your great-grand-uncle, Prus. Shall I read it to you? "Meine liebste, liebste Ellian."

PRUS

Emilia, isn't it?

KOLONATY

Oh, no. Ellian, and on the envelope, "Ellian MacGregor, Royal Opera House, Vienna." Wait, Gregor. We will still win on Ellian. "Meine liebste, liebste Ellian."

EMILIA

Stop. Don't read any more. Those are my papers.

KOLONATY

But they are very interesting to us.

EMILIA

Don't read them. [*Stepping forward*] I shall tell everything myself. Everything you ask me.

KOLONATY

Really?

EMILIA

I swear.

KOLONATY

[*Folding the papers*]

Then we beg your pardon a million times — that we had to force you this way.

EMILIA

Are you going to pass judgment on me?

KOLONATY

No, no. It will be just a friendly chat.

EMILIA

But I want you to judge me. It must be like the inquisition.

KOLONATY

But ——

EMILIA

Please, it is my wish.

HAUK-SENDORF

Ssh — the inquisition — Spain — He, he!

KOLONATY

Aha, I see. [*To Emilia*] Very well, we will convene an inquisitorial court — Vitek, lend a hand — we must arrange the courtroom.

[*Kolonaty and Vitek quickly arrange the furniture in such a way as to suggest a courtroom. The others catch the idea and assist. The sofa is pushed back slightly to the center of the room, for the jury. A large table is placed right, for Kolonaty as presiding judge and inquisitor, and Vitek as the clerk. Emilia*

is to sit alone at the left. While they are doing this, Hauk-Sendorf stands aloof and Emilia goes to her dressing table and, picking up a bottle and glass, takes a long drink. The court is by this time arranged and they all turn towards Emilia]

KOLONATY

Take it away.

EMILIA

[*Holding Vitek off*]

No, or I won't speak. [*She pours out another glass*] This is only for courage. [*She drinks*]

KOLONATY

The court will sit. [*All take their places except Emilia, who stands in a defiant attitude by her dressing table. Kolonaty, pointing to her chair, speaks sharply*] Your place is there. Sit down. [*Emilia drops into the chair*] Gregor, I appoint you public prosecutor. Recite the accusation.

GREGOR

[*Rising*]

The accused, Emilia Marty, a singer. She is accused before God and us of fraud and falsification of papers for her own selfish purposes. And furthermore and in addition, she has transgressed against all trust and decency — against life itself! That does not belong to human judgment. She will have to answer for that in a higher court. [*He sits down*]

KOLONATY

Has anybody anything to say for the accused? No one? Then we may proceed with the cross-examination. [*He rises*] Stand up, accused. What is your name?

EMILIA

[*Standing up*]
I?

KOLONATY

Of course. You! You! You! What is your name?

EMILIA

[*Calmly*]
Elina Makropoulos.

KOLONATY

[*Excitedly*]
What?

EMILIA

Elina Makropoulos.

KOLONATY

Born where?

EMILIA

In Crete.

KOLONATY

When?

EMILIA

When?

KOLONATY

How old are you?

EMILIA
Well, how old do you think?

KOLONATY
I should say about thirty.

VITEK
Over thirty.

KRISTINA
Over forty.

EMILIA
[*Sticks out her tongue at Kristina*]
Toad!

KOLONATY
Behave! You must respect your judges.

EMILIA
Do I look that old?

KOLONATY
When were you born?

EMILIA
Fifteen hundred and eighty-five.

KOLONATY
What?

EMILIA
Fifteen hundred and eighty-five.

KOLONATY
In the year eighty-five. Then you are thirty-nine years old, aren't you?

EMILIA

Three hundred and thirty-nine years, if you please.

KOLONATY

I ask you once more to speak seriously. How old are you?

EMILIA

Three hundred and thirty-nine years.

KOLONATY

Well, upon my word! And who was your father?

EMILIA

Hieronymus Makropoulos, the personal physician of Emperor Rudolph II.

KOLONATY

[*Completely exasperated*]

To hell with you! I'm not going to talk to her!

[*He sits down and Prus rises*]

PRUS

What is your real name?

EMILIA

Elina Makropoulos.

PRUS

What! Elina Makropoulos, the mistress of Joseph Prus?

EMILIA

[*With a little bow*]

You put it nicely.

PRUS

What?

EMILIA

[*With a gay bravado*]

Yes, I was the mistress of Pepi Prus. Gregor's our son.

GREGOR

And Ellian MacGregor?

EMILIA

That is I.

GREGOR

Are you raving?

EMILIA

I am your great-grandmother, or something like that. Ferdi was my boy. Do you understand?

GREGOR

Which Ferdi?

EMILIA

Ferdinand Gregor, but he is in the birth-record as Ferdinand Makropoulos because — well, there I gave his real name.

KOLONATY

And when were you born?

EMILIA

[*Raising her arms*]

Fifteen hundred and eighty-five. *Christos Soter!* Leave me in peace.

HAUK-SENDORF

And — and excuse me, but you are Eugenie Montez?

EMILIA

I was, Max; I was. But then I was only two hundred and ninety years old; and I was also Ekatorina Myskina, and Elsa Muller and all the others. [*Turning to the others*] One cannot live with you more than thirty years at a time.

KOLONATY

Especially not a singer.

EMILIA

I should think not!

VITEK

And you lived, if I may ask, in the eighteenth century?

EMILIA

Of course.

VITEK

You knew — Danton personally?

EMILIA

I knew him. He was a disgusting man.

PRUS

And how did you know what was in Pepi's will?

EMILIA

Because Pepi told me before he put it there so I could tell that stupid fool — Ferdi Gregor.

GREGOR

Why didn't you tell him?

EMILIA

[*With a shrug of the shoulders*]

Oh, I simply cannot be bothered with my brats.

HAUK-SENDORF

My, my, my, how you talk!

EMILIA

My dear, it is a long time since I was a lady.

VITEK

Did you have any more children?

EMILIA

About twenty, I think. One loses count. [*Picking up the bottle and glass*] Wouldn't someone else like to drink? Ah, the dryness in my mouth. I'll burn.

[*She drinks and falls back in the chair*]

PRUS

There are letters here signed E. M. Were those written by you?

EMILIA

They were; you know it. Give them back to me. I like to read them sometimes. Beastly, isn't it?

PRUS

Did you write them as Elina Makropoulos or Ellian MacGregor?

EMILIA

It is all the same. Pepi knew who I was. I told him everything. I liked him.

HAUK-SENDORF

[*Getting up in excitement*]

Eugenie!

EMILIA

Keep quiet, Max. I liked you, too. It was nice to live with you, when you were a young ensign. But Pepi — [*Her voice breaks*] — I liked him the best of all. That is why I lent him — the Makropoulos secret — when he wanted it so much ——

PRUS

What did you lend him?

EMILIA

The Makropoulos secret.

PRUS

What is that?

EMILIA

That paper you gave me back today. The sealed envelope. Pepi wanted to try it. He promised to give it back — but instead of that he hid it with the will. Perhaps, so that I would have to come and get it — but I didn't come until now. [*She laughs, then suddenly stops and turns to Prus*] How did Pepi die?

PRUS

In fever and with terrible cramps.

EMILIA

That was it! That was it! *Aia Maria!* I told him so!

GREGOR

And you came here just for that Greek thing?

EMILIA

Ha, ha! I'm not going to give it to you. No, my dear fellow. And you thought, Berti, that I came just to help you and your silly case! I don't care a damn if you win. All I want is that secret.

GREGOR

Why?

EMILIA

Because I'm getting old. Because I'm at the end. I want to try it again. Feel, Berti, how icy I am getting. Feel my hands. Ah, God! My hands!

HAUK-SENDORF

What is the Makropoulos secret, if you please?

EMILIA

It is written there how one does it.

HAUK-SENDORF

How one does what?

EMILIA

How a human being can live for three hundred years. To be young for three hundred years. My father wrote that for Emperor

Rudolph. You don't know anything about it, do you?

VITEK

Only from history.

EMILIA

You can't tell anything from history. That's nonsense! *Penaia* — What did I want to say? [*She takes a pinch of something out of a snuff box*] Does anybody want some?

GREGOR

What is that?

EMILIA

Nothing, nothing. What was I talking about?

VITEK

About Emperor Rudolph.

EMILIA

Aha, he was an immoral man! Just wait! I could tell you things about him!

KOLONATY

The court is not interested.

EMILIA

Well, anyway, when he started to grow old — he kept looking about for an elixir of life, or something, to make him young again, you see. Then my father came to him and wrote that — that thing — so he could stay young for three

hundred years. But Emperor Rudolph was afraid it was poison and wanted to try it first on the doctor's daughter. That was I. I was sixteen then. So Father tried it on me. He called it a " charm," but it belonged to the devil.

HAUK-SENDORF

What was it?

EMILIA

I must not say. I lay for a week or longer, beside myself in fever. But I got well.

VITEK

And the Emperor?

EMILIA

Did nothing. He went mad. How could he be sure that I was going to live for three hundred years? So he put my father in a tower as a fraud and I ran away with everything he had written to Hungary or to Turkey, I don't remember which.

KOLONATY

Did you show the charm to anyone — the Makropoulos secret?

EMILIA

I did. A Tyrolian priest tried it in sixteen-sixty, or thereabouts. Perhaps he is still alive, I don't know. At one time he was Pope and called himself Alexander, or Pius, or something like that. Then a Statia officer — but he

was killed. Ugo was his name. Heavens! What a good-looking man he was! Then at Nageli there was Andrew, and a good-for-nothing Bombita and Pepi Prus, who died of it. Pepi was the last one — and it remained with him. And now I don't know any more. Ask Bombita. Bombita is alive, but I don't know what his name is now.

KOLONATY

[*Rising and taking her by the shoulders*]

Pardon me, but you are now two hundred and forty-nine years old, aren't you?

EMILIA

No, three hundred and thirty-nine.

KOLONATY

You are intoxicated. From the year fifteen eighty-five to the present day is two hundred and forty-nine years, isn't it?

EMILIA

My God! Don't try to confuse me! Three hundred and thirty-nine.

KOLONATY

Why did you forge the handwriting of Ellian MacGregor?

EMILIA

Why? I, myself, am Ellian MacGregor!

KOLONATY

Do not lie! You are Emilia Marty.

EMILIA

Yes, but only for the last twelve years.

KOLONATY

Then do you confess that you stole the medallion of Eugenie Montez — Eh?

EMILIA

Good Lord! That is not true. Eugenie Montez ——

KOLONATY

It is in the accusation. You acknowledged it.

EMILIA

That is not true!

KOLONATY

Who is your accomplice?

EMILIA

There isn't one.

KOLONATY

Do not deny it. We know everything. When were you born?

EMILIA

[*Weakly*]

Fifteen eighty-five.

KOLONATY

[*He produces a glass filled with some liquid*]

Drink a full glass of this.

EMILIA

No, I don't want to! Leave me alone!

KOLONATY

You must! A full glass, quick!
[*He puts it to her lips*]

EMILIA

[*In terror*]
What are you doing to me? Berti! [*She drinks*] Ah — this is — turning my — head.

KOLONATY

What is your name?

EMILIA

I don't feel well.
[*She sinks to her knees*]

KOLONATY

[*Catching her and bending back her head*]
What is your name?

EMILIA

Elina — Makro ——

KOLONATY

Do not lie! Do you know who I am? I am a priest. Confess to me!

EMILIA

Pater — hemon — hos — eis — en uranois —

KOLONATY

What is your name?

EMILIA

Elina — —— poulos.

KOLONATY

May God receive the soul of this, thine unworthy servant, Emilia Marty, m-m-m —, Amen. [*She screams*] Stand up! Who are you?

EMILIA

[*Falling to the floor in a faint*]
Elina ——

KOLONATY

Damn!

GREGOR

What is it?

KOLONATY

She isn't lying! Quick! [*He rings the bell*] A doctor, Gregor!

KRISTINA

You've poisoned her!

KOLONATY

Slightly.

GREGOR

[*At the door into the hall*]
Is the doctor there, please?

PHYSICIAN

[*Entering*]
Mr. Hauk, we have been waiting for you for an hour. Come along, now!

KOLONATY

Hold on! This first, doctor.
[*Pointing to Emilia*]

PHYSICIAN

[*Kneeling beside Emilia*]
Fainted?

KOLONATY

Poisoned.

PHYSICIAN

With what? [*Leaning over Emilia and smelling her mouth*] Aha! [*He stands up*] Put her to bed, somewhere.

KOLONATY

Gregor, carry her into the bedroom! As her closest kin ——

PHYSICIAN

Is there any warm water?

PRUS

Yes.
[*He rings*]

PHYSICIAN

Fine. If you please. [*He writes a prescription*] Black coffee — and to the pharmacy with this.
[*He goes into the bedroom*]

KOLONATY

Well, then, gentlemen ——
[*The Chambermaid enters*]

CHAMBERMAID

Did Madam ring?

KOLONATY

Yes. She would like some black coffee — very strong black coffee.

CHAMBERMAID

He, he! How do you know, Sir? ——

KOLONATY

And run over to the druggist's with this. Be off! Hurry!

[*The Chambermaid goes out*]

[*Sitting down in the middle of the room*]

There's something in what she says.

PRUS

I know it.

HAUK-SENDORF

I — I — please don't laugh; but I believe her, absolutely.

KOLONATY

You, too, Prus?

PRUS

Absolutely.

KOLONATY

I do, also. Do you know what it means?

PRUS

That Gregor will get Loukov.

KOLONATY

Hm, is that very unpleasant?

PRUS

I have no heirs.

[*Gregor returns with his hand done up in a handkerchief*]

HAUK-SENDORF

How is she?

GREGOR

A little better. But she bit me, the animal. Do you know, I believe her?

KOLONATY

We, too, alas!

[*A pause*]

HAUK-SENDORF

Good God! Three hundred years! Three — hundred — years!

KRISTINA

[*Shuddering*]

Three hundred years. That's terrible.

[*The Chambermaid enters with coffee*]

KOLONATY

Take it to her, Kristina. See what you can do for her. [*Kristina goes into the bedroom with the coffee; the Chambermaid goes out. Making sure that both doors are closed*] There! Now, gentlemen, what shall we do with it?

GREGOR

With what?

KOLONATY

With the Makropoulos secret. Somewhere here is a formula for a three-hundred-year life. Can we get hold of it?

PRUS

She has it in her bosom.

KOLONATY

Good! Gentlemen, it is a thing of unimaginable importance. What shall we do with it?

GREGOR

Nothing at all. The formula belongs to me. I am her heir.

KOLONATY

Keep your mouth shut! As long as she is alive, you are not her heir; and she can live for another three hundred years, if she wants to. Don't you see, we must get hold of it.

GREGOR

By trickery?

KOLONATY

Why not? This is something of such importance — for us and for everybody, that — hm. Gentlemen, you understand me? Ought we to let her keep it? What? Should she alone or, at best, some such good-for-nothing as Bombita have the advantage of it? Who will get it?

GREGOR

First of all, we must help her.

KOLONATY

Don't worry about her. Prus, if you, yourself, had the secret in your hands, would you give it to me? You know —so I could live for three hundred years?

PRUS

No.

KOLONATY

You see, gentlemen, we shall have to come to some agreement among ourselves. What shall we do with it?

VITEK

[*Standing up and coming to the center of the group*]

We'll make the Makropoulos secret public.

KOLONATY

Oh, no! Not that!

VITEK

We'll give it to everybody! We'll give it to the people. Everyone — everyone has the same right to life. We live for such a short time. How insignificant! God! How insignificant it is to be a human being.

KOLONATY

Rubbish!

VITEK

No, gentlemen, it does mean something! Just consider — the human soul, brains, work, love — everything. Good God, what can a man do in sixty years! What does he enjoy? What

does he learn? He doesn't even enjoy the fruit of the tree he has planted; he doesn't learn all that his predecessors knew; he doesn't finish his work; he dies, and he hasn't lived. Ah, God, but we live so insignificantly!

KOLONATY

Well, Vitek ——

VITEK

And he hasn't had time for gladness, and he hasn't had time to think, and he hasn't had time for anything except a desire for bread. He hasn't done anything, and he hasn't known anything. No, not even himself. Why have you lived? Has it been worth the trouble?

KOLONATY

Do you want to make me cry?

VITEK

We die like animals. What else is immortality of the soul but a protest against the shortness of life? A human being is something more than a turtle or a raven; a man needs more time to live. Sixty years — it's not right. It's weakness, it's ignorance, and it's animal-like.

HAUK-SENDORF

Oh, my, and I am already seventy-six!

VITEK

Let's give everyone a three-hundred-year life. It will be the biggest event since the creation of man; it will be the liberating and creating anew of man! God, what man will be able to do in three hundred years! To be a child and pupil for fifty years; fifty years to understand the world and its ways, and to see everything there is; and a hundred years to work in; and then a hundred years, when we have understood everything, to live in wisdom, to teach, and to give example. How valuable human life would be if it lasted for three hundred years! There would be no wars. There would be no fear, no selfishness. Everyone would be wise and dignified. [*Wringing his hands*] Give people life! Give them full human life!

KOLONATY

Yes, that is all very nice. Very nice, but —

GREGOR

Many thanks! To be a clerk for three hundred years — or to knit socks!

VITEK

But ——

GREGOR

Or to know everything. And, besides —— Why, most people are willing to live as they do only because they are ignorant.

KOLONATY

Vitek, it's absurd. Our social system is founded on shortness of life. Take — contracts, mortgages, debts and all. No one will make a contract for three hundred years! And marriage — Why, nobody is going to stay married for three hundred years! Man, you're an anarchist. You want to revise the entire social system.

HAUK-SENDORF

And — pardon — then after three hundred years each could make himself young again —

KOLONATY

— And live forever. [*To Vitek*] Don't you see?

VITEK

Yes, but it could be forbidden. At the end of three hundred years, everyone would have to die!

KOLONATY

Will you listen to him! Now he wants to forbid people living!

HAUK-SENDORF

[*To Kolonaty*]

Pardon me, but I — I think that the secret could be distributed for a stipulation.

KOLONATY

How's that?

HAUK-SENDORF

Well, I mean by years, for a certain sum — ten years of life. Three hundred years is quite long and someone might not want it. But everyone would buy ten years, wouldn't they?

KOLONATY

We could establish a wholesale commerce in "years." A good idea! I can see the orders now: "Send us by mail twelve hundred years of life (prepared for people), Kohn & Co." "Express two million years, class A, well wrapped up. Viden Brothers." Hauk, that's not bad at all.

[*He pats Hauk-Sendorf good-naturedly on the back*]

HAUK-SENDORF

Pardon, but I — I am no merchant, see? But when a person is old, he would like — a little life — but three hundred years is too much, isn't it?

CHAMBERMAID

[*Entering*]

If you please, here is the prescription from the drug store.

KOLONATY

Thank you. How long would you like to live?

CHAMBERMAID

Hihi, about thirty years more.

KOLONATY

No longer than that?

CHAMBERMAID

No. What would I do then?

[*She laughs and looks up at Kolonaty*]

KOLONATY

You see, Vitek.

[*The Chambermaid goes out. Kolonaty knocks on bedroom door*]

PHYSICIAN

[*In the doorway*]

What is it? [*Kolonaty hands him the medicine*] Ah, very good.

HAUK-SENDORF

How is the lady, please?

PHYSICIAN

Not at all well.

[*He goes into bedroom*]

PRUS

[*Standing up*]

Gentlemen, chance has placed in our hands a certain secret. It concerns the prolonging of life. Let us admit that it is a possibility. No one of us, I hope, will abuse this knowledge.

VITEK

That's just what I say! We must prolong the life of all.

PRUS

No, only the life of the strong. The life of the most talented. For the common herd this short life is good enough.

VITEK

Oh, no!

PRUS

Please, I do not want to argue. The ordinary, small, stupid one surely does not die. He is everlasting. Littleness multiplies without ceasing, like flies and mice. Only greatness dies. Only strength and talent die — and cannot be replaced. We ought to keep it in our own hands. We can prolong the life of the aristocracy.

VITEK

Aristocracy! Do you hear that? Privilege on life!

PRUS

Only the best are important in life. Only the chief, fertile and executive men. I am not mentioning women, but there are in this world about ten or twenty, perhaps a thousand, men who are irreplaceable. We can keep them. We can develop in them superhuman reason and supernatural power. We can breed ten, a hundred or a thousand supermen — masters and creators. So, I say, select those who have the right to unlimited life.

KOLONATY

Pray tell, who would name the chosen ones? The governments? The Plebiscite? Swedish Academy?

PRUS

No idiotic voting! The strongest would hand over life to the strongest. It would be — a dynasty of the strong.

VITEK

Until the time when the rabble would claim its own right to life.

PRUS

Time would kill them off. Progress in the world would replace the small and weak despot with the strong and big despot. Privileged long life — that's the despotism of the select. That is the rule of reason. Superhuman authority in knowledge and executive ability. You have it in your hands, gentlemen. You can abuse it. I've told you all.

[*He sits down*]

KOLONATY

Hm! Do I belong to this best dozen class, or does Gregor?

PRUS

No.

GREGOR

But you do, of course.

PRUS

Not any more — not now.

GREGOR

Gentlemen, let's stop this useless talk. The Makropoulos secret belongs to the Makropoulos family. Let them do with it what they will.

VITEK

What's that you say?

GREGOR

Only the members of the family enjoy the privilege of the secret. Only he who is the descendant of Ellina Makropoulos, whoever he may be.

KOLONATY

And he will live forever, just because he was born of some loafer or baron and a raving, hysterical woman?

GREGOR

All the same, it will still belong to him.

KOLONATY

This is a pretty business.

PHYSICIAN

[*Coming out of the bedroom*]

She is resting. Let her sleep.

HAUK-SENDORF

Yes, yes, let her stay. That's good.

PHYSICIAN

Come along home, Mr. Hauk-Sendorf. I'll take you.

HAUK-SENDORF

But we're having an important conference, aren't we? Please let me stay a little longer. I——

PHYSICIAN

[*Taking him by the arm*]

Now, now. Someone is waiting for you outside the door. No fooling, old fellow, or——

HAUK-SENDORF

Yes, yes — I — I — I'll come right away.

PHYSICIAN

Your servant, gentlemen.

[*He goes out*]

KOLONATY

Gregor, did you mean what you just said?

GREGOR

I did.

KRISTINA

[*Coming out of bedroom*]

Talk quietly. She ought to sleep.

KOLONATY

Kristina, come here. Would you like to live for three hundred years?

KRISTINA

No.

KOLONATY

And if you had the secret for such a long life, what would you do with it?

KRISTINA

I don't know.

VITEK

You'd give it to all the world, wouldn't you?

KRISTINA

No — I don't think so. Do not ask me.

HAUK-SENDORF

Oh, yes you would, Miss, one likes so much to live.

KRISTINA

[*Covering up her eyes*]

When everything is gone? Oh, no, no!

[*She crosses over to a chair and sits down*]

PRUS

[*Going over to her*]

Thank you, for Janek.

KRISTINA

Why?

PRUS

For having thought of him now.

KRISTINA

Thought of him? As if I could really think — of anything else.

KOLONATY

And here we are, arguing over eternal life.

EMILIA

[*Coming out of the bedroom like a shadow. Everyone stands up*]
Pardon me — for having left you.

GREGOR

How are you feeling?

EMILIA

My head aches — desolately — abominably.

HAUK-SENDORF

That will go away.

EMILIA

No, it never will go away. I've had it for two hundred years.

KOLONATY

What?

EMILIA

Ennui. No, it isn't that. It's — oh, you people have no name for it. There's no name for it in any tongue. Bombita used to talk about it, too — it's terrible.

GREGOR

What is it?

EMILIA

I don't know. Everything is so dull, empty and ordinary —— Are you all here? It seems as if you were not — as if you were things or shadows. What do you want me to do?

KOLONATY

Perhaps we ought to go?

EMILIA

No, it doesn't matter. It's all the same, whether you're here or not. And you make such a fuss over each little death. You are queer ——

VITEK

What is the matter with you?

EMILIA

[*Crying out*]

One ought not, ought not, ought not to live so long!

VITEK

Why?

EMILIA

One can't go through with it. One lives for a hundred, or a hundred and thirty years, and then — then one realizes — then one finds out — then one's soul dies.

VITEK

One realizes what?

EMILIA

God! There is no word for it. Then one doesn't believe in anything. Not in anything! And from it comes that ennui. Berti, you used to say that I sang as if I were frozen. You see, art has meaning only so long as one doesn't

understand; but when one understands all — one sees that singing is the same as keeping silent. Everything is the same. There is no difference in anything.

VITEK

That's not true. When you sing — then people are moved to something better and higher.

EMILIA

People are never better. Nothing can ever change. Nothing matters. If there were an explosion now, or an earthquake, if the end of the world were here, nothing would matter. Even I do not matter. You are here and I am far away — away from everything —— Three hundred years — oh, God, if you only knew how easy it is for you to live!

KOLONATY

Why?

EMILIA

You are so near to everything. For you, everything has a meaning, for you everything has some feeling. Oh, God, if I could only once more —— [*She wrings her hands*] Fools, you are so fortunate. Everything interests you — like monkeys. You believe everything; you believe in love, in yourselves, in progress, in humanity — I don't know in what. You believe in pleasure, Max. Kristina, you believe in love and faithfulness. You believe in foolishness,

Vitek. Everyone, everyone believes in everything. You — fools!

VITEK

But, why, there are—higher values—ideals—

EMILIA

Yes, but only for you. How shall I tell you? Love there may be, but it is only in you. As soon as it is not, then there is no love — nowhere in the universe. And one cannot love for three hundred years. It does not last. Everything is irksome. It is tiresome to be bad and tiresome to be good. Heaven and earth tire one. And then you find out that there truly is none. Nothing exists — neither sin, nor pain, nor desire — absolutely nothing. Only that exists which has some feeling. And for you, everything has feeling. Oh, God, I was like you once. I was a girl; I had faith; I was happy. God in heaven!

HAUK-SENDORF

What? What's happened to you?

EMILIA

If you could only understand what Bombita said to me! We old ones know altogether too much. But you have more than we, you fools! Infinitely more! You have everything. Why, you couldn't wish for anything more. You live, but in us life has stopped. And it cannot go on! God, what loneliness!

PRUS

Why did you come here — for the Makropoulos secret? Why do you want to live longer?

EMILIA

[*Quietly, almost in a whisper*]
Because I am afraid to die.

PRUS

So even an immortal isn't spared that?

EMILIA

No.
[*A pause*]

PRUS

We have been too severe with you.

EMILIA

No, you were right. It is horrible to be so old. Do you know, children are afraid of me? Kristina, you loathe me, don't you?

KRISTINA

No! I am very sorry for you.

EMILIA

Sorry? You don't even envy me? [*A pause. She shudders and takes the folded paper from her bosom*] Here it is written, " Ego, Hieronymus Makropoulos, iatros Kaisoros Rudolfo —" And further on, word for word, what to do. [*She stands up*] Take it, Berti, I don't want it any more.

GREGOR

Thank you, I don't want it, either.

EMILIA

No? Then you, Max. You like to live. You will be able to love, see? Take it.

HAUK-SENDORF

Please — can one die of it? And does it hurt to take it?

EMILIA

Yes, it hurts. Are you afraid?

HAUK-SENDORF

Yes.

EMILIA

But you will live for three hundred years.

HAUK-SENDORF

If — if it didn't hurt — Hihi, I don't want it.

EMILIA

Doctor, you are a crafty man. Do you want it?

KOLONATY

You are very kind, but I won't have anything to do with it.

EMILIA

You are so ridiculous; Vitek, I'll give it to you. You'll probably benefit all humanity with it.

VITEK

No, please. I think I'd — rather not.

EMILIA

Prus, you are such a strong man. Are you, too, afraid to live for three hundred years?

PRUS

Yes.

EMILIA

God, then no one wants it? Are you here, Kristina? You haven't said a word. Poor girl, I took your sweetheart from you. You take it. You are beautiful; you'll live for three hundred years. You'll sing like Emilia Marty. You'll be famous. Remember, in a few years you'll begin to grow old, and then you'll repent — take it, girl!

KRISTINA

[*Taking the paper*]
Thank you.

VITEK

What are you going to do with it, Krista?

KRISTINA

[*Opening the envelope*]
I don't know.

GREGOR

Are you going to try it?

KOLONATY

Isn't she afraid? — Give it back!

VITEK

Return it!

EMILIA

Leave her alone.

[*The others draw back from Kristina. She silently places the paper over the burning candle*]

VITEK

Don't burn it! It's an historical document.

KOLONATY

Wait! Don't!

HAUK-SENDORF

Good God!

GREGOR

Take it away from her.

PRUS

Leave her alone!

[*They are again crushed in silence*]

HAUK-SENDORF

Why, look, it doesn't want to burn.

GREGOR

It's parchment.

KOLONATY

How slowly it glows. Kristina, don't burn yourself.

HAUK-SENDORF

Won't you please let me have just a little bit! Just a little piece of it?

[*There is a moment of silence as the paper burns*]

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